



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Medieval History

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jmedhist



The defence of the Holy Land and the memory of the Maccabees

Nicholas Morton

School of Arts and Humanities, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Lane, Nottingham, NG11 8NS, United Kingdom

A B S T R A C T

Keywords:

Maccabees
Crusades
Military orders
Biblical exegesis
Kingdom of Jerusalem
Latin east
Baltic
Holy Land

This article explores the evolving use of Maccabean ideas in sources concerning the conduct of Christian holy warfare between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. It demonstrates that the memory of the Maccabees and other Old Testament exemplars played an important role in shaping the idea of crusading and its subsequent evolution to encompass new frontiers in the Baltic and Iberia, as well as structural developments in crusading, such as the establishment of the military orders.

© 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

On 8 June 1191 King Richard I of England landed at Acre, joining the forces of the Third Crusade outside the city. His arrival was met with celebration and one writer recalled: 'It would have been difficult to find anybody who was not praising and rejoicing, each in their own way. Some testified to the joy in their hearts by singing popular songs, others recited epic tales of ancient heroes' deeds, as an incitement to modern people to imitate them.'¹ Describing this and other campaigns, many writers drew upon legendary and biblical warriors to provide instructive paradigms for crusaders. Among the most popular were the Maccabees and their famous leader Judas Maccabaeus.

The Maccabean (Hasmonaeon) family led the Jews of Judaea in revolt against the persecutions of the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV in the second century BC, subsequently defending Jerusalem against a series of invasions. Their actions are recorded in the Books of the Maccabees, which in the medieval period were included in the Bible under the title *Libri historici novissimi*.² A famous moment in these

E-mail addresses: mortonnic@hotmail.com; nicholas.morton@ntu.ac.uk

¹ 'Itinerarium peregrinorum et gesta regis Ricardi', in: *Chronicles and memorials of the reign of Richard I*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols (Rolls Series 38, London, 1864), vol. 1, 212. Translation taken from H. Nicholson, *The chronicle of the Third Crusade. The Itinerarium peregrinorum et gesta regis Ricardi* (Aldershot, 1997), 202.

² See B. Bar-Kochva, *Judas Maccabaeus. The Jewish struggle against the Seleucids* (Cambridge, 1989).

accounts was the execution of a group of Jews in Jerusalem in the early stages of the rebellion, who refused to reject their faith and who became known as the Maccabean martyrs. As Bernard of Clairvaux later pointed out, they alone of the Old Testament martyrs had a feast day in the Catholic calendar, 1 August.³

This study explores the way in which contemporaries drew upon the memory of the Maccabees to recruit, control and remember the crusades. As the crusading movement developed to take new forms, so the imagery associated with it evolved accordingly. The use of Maccabean exemplars before the First Crusade is discussed to indicate their influence in the emerging ideas of Christian holy warfare and also to explore the possibility that Armenian traditions may have contributed to the creation of a distinctive crusader ideology. From this it will be shown how subsequent manifestations of the crusading movement — including the military orders, the crusades to the Baltic and Iberia, and the struggle against heresy — adopted these exemplars, moulding their memory to serve new purposes. Earlier studies on the Maccabees have included work on their memory in western literary culture,⁴ their employment in eleventh century and First Crusade sources,⁵ and their connection to the Teutonic order.⁶ Despite this, there has been little attempt to trace the developing employment of Maccabean allusions over time and their adaptation to face new challenges within the crusading movement.

The First Crusade and its origins

During the First Crusade there was a tremendous sense of rediscovery as participants found themselves in the lands of the Old and New Testaments. Archas was identified as the town founded by Noah's nephew.⁷ Ramleh was described (albeit inaccurately) as the site of St George's tomb.⁸ Many writers drew parallels between the crusade and the exodus of the Jews from Egypt to the Promised Land.⁹ The material possessions and corporeal remains of biblical saints and martyrs were recovered by priests and soldiers, along with items revered for their association with Christ's life, such as pieces of the True Cross and the lance which pierced His side at the Crucifixion.¹⁰ At other points the crusaders deliberately recreated Old Testament events in an attempt to gain God's blessing. While the crusaders were besieging Arqa (a town to the north-east of Tripoli), Ralph of Caen reports the construction of a golden image of Jesus Christ in imitation of the Israelites' creation of the tabernacle. In doing so, it seems that the pilgrims hoped to receive God's direction during their pilgrimage, just as the Jews had received divine support in the desert.¹¹ On 8 July 1099, during the siege of Jerusalem, the crusaders processed around the city walls in a deliberate re-enactment of Joshua's actions at the siege of Jericho.¹²

³ St Bernard, *Opere di San Bernardo. Lettere*, ed. F. Gastaldelli, 6 vols (Milan, 1984), vol. 6:i, 469–78.

⁴ R. McGrath, 'The romance of the Maccabees in mediaeval art and literature' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 1963).

⁵ J. Dunbabin, 'The Maccabees as exemplars in the tenth and eleventh centuries', in: *The Bible in the medieval world. Essays in memory of Beryl Smalley* (Studies in Church History, subsidia 4, Oxford, 1985), 31–41; E. Lapina, 'Anti-Jewish rhetoric in Guibert of Nogent's *Dei gesta per Francos*', *Journal of Medieval History*, 35 (2009), 239–53; E. Lapina, 'The Maccabees and the battle of Antioch', in: *Dying for the faith, killing for the faith. Old Testament faith warriors (Maccabees 1 and 2) in cultural perspective*, ed. G. Signori (forthcoming). I am indebted to E. Lapina for sending me an advance copy of her article.

⁶ M. Fischer, 'Biblical heroes and the uses of literature: the Teutonic order in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries', in: *Crusade and conversion on the Baltic frontier, 1150–1500*, ed. A. Murray (Aldershot, 2001), 261–75; M. Fischer, 'The Books of the Maccabees and the Teutonic order', *Crusades*, 4 (2005), 59–71.

⁷ Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg, 1913), 268–9.

⁸ *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, ed. and trans. Rosalind Hill (London, 1962), 87.

⁹ D. Green, *The Millstätter Exodus. A crusading epic* (Cambridge, 1966), 244; Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana. History of the journey to Jerusalem*, ed. and trans. S.B. Edgington (Oxford, 2007), 2.

¹⁰ For discussion of the Holy Lance, see T. Asbridge, 'The Holy Lance of Antioch: power, devotion and memory on the First Crusade', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 33 (2007), 3–36. On the finding of the spear of St George, see Albert of Aachen, *Historia*, 316.

¹¹ Ralph of Caen, 'Gesta Tancredi', in: *Recueil des historiens des croisades. Historiens occidentaux*, 5 vols (Paris, 1844–95) [hereafter *RHCHO*], vol. 3, 683; Exodus 36:30–5.

¹² Guibert de Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Corpus Christianorum continuatio mediaevalis [hereafter CCCM] 127A, Turnhout, 1996), 276–7; Green, *The Millstätter Exodus*, 249; John France, *Victory in the east. A military history of the First Crusade* (Cambridge, 1994), 333, 347.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1159897>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1159897>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)