

## Al-Shafi'i, *Kitab al-Umm*<sup>1</sup>

*This is a template for a standard set of guarantees that the Imam, the supreme religious leader of Islam (then the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad), might make to Jews and Christians living under his care in a specific city. It dates from the 700s to the 800s.*

If the Imam wishes to write a document for the poll tax (*jizya*) of non-Muslims, he should write:

In the name of God, the Merciful and the Compassionate. This is a document written by the servant of God so-and-so,<sup>2</sup> Commander of the Faithful, on the 2nd of the month of Rabi'l, in the year such-and-such, to so-and-so son of so-and-so, the Christian, of the descendants of such-and-such, of the people of the city of so-and-so.

I accord to you and to the Christians of the city of so-and-so that which is accorded to the *dhimmis*, in conformity with what you have given to me and the conditions I have laid down concerning what is due to you and to them, and I have agreed to your request and accorded to you and to them, on behalf of myself and of all the Muslims, safe-conduct [*aman*], for as long as you and they maintain all that we have required of you, namely:

You will be subject to the authority of Islam and to no contrary authority. You will not refuse to carry out any obligation which we think fit to impose upon you by virtue of this authority.

If any one of you speaks improperly of Muhammad—may God bless and save him—of the Book of God, or of His religion, he forfeits the protection [*dhimma*] of God, of the Commander of the Faithful, and of all the Muslims; he has contravened the conditions upon which he was given his safe-conduct; his property and his life are at the disposal of the Commander of the Faithful, like the property and lives of the people of the house of war [*dar al-harb*].

If one of them commits fornication with a Muslim woman or goes through a form of marriage with her or robs a Muslim on the highway or subverts a Muslim from his religion or gives aid to those who made war against the Muslims by fighting with them or by showing them the weak points of the Muslims, or by harboring their spies, he has contravened his pact [*ahd*], and his life and his property are at the disposal of the Muslims.

If he commits some lesser offense against the property or the honor of a Muslim or against an infidel under Muslim protection, with a pact or safe-conduct, he shall be punished.

We shall supervise all your dealings with Muslims. If there is anything in which you are engaged which is not lawful for a Muslim, we shall reject it and punish you for it. If you sell a Muslim something we hold forbidden, such as wine, pig, blood, or carrion, and the like, we shall annul the sale, confiscate the price if it has been paid, and not return the thing to you if it still exists, but pour it out if it is wine or blood and burn it if it is carrion; if the purchaser has already consumed it, we shall not oblige him to pay for it, but we shall punish you for it.

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Shafi'i, *Kitab al-Umm*, cited in Bernard Lewis, ed. and trans., *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople*, Vol. 2, *Religion and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 219-23; from Richard Lim and David Kammerling Smith, ed. *The West in the Wider World: Sources and Perspectives*, Vol. 1. From Antiquity to Early Modernity (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003), 207-210.

<sup>2</sup> This means, "insert name here," with similar placeholders throughout the text.

You shall not give a Muslim anything to eat or drink which is forbidden, nor marry him in the presence of witnesses chosen from among you nor by wedding rites we hold to be invalid.

We shall not supervise transactions between you and your co-religionists or other unbelievers nor inquire into them as long as you are content. If the buyer or seller among you desires the annulment of a sale and comes to us to ask for this, we shall annul it or uphold it in accordance with the provisions of our law. But if payment has been made and the purchase consumed, we shall not order restitution, for this would count as a completed sale between polytheists.

If one of you or any other unbeliever applies to us for judgment, we shall adjudicate according to the law of Islam. But if he does not come to us, we shall not intervene among you.

If you commit manslaughter against a Muslim or a protected person [*mnahad*], whether protected by you or by others, your clan is liable for the blood price as with the Muslims...

You may not display crosses in Muslim cities, nor proclaim polytheism, nor build [new] churches or meeting places for your prayers, nor strike clappers, nor proclaim your polytheistic beliefs on the subject of Jesus, son of Miriam, or any other to a Muslim.

You shall wear the girdle [*zunnar*] over all your garments, your cloaks and the rest, so that the girdles are not hidden. You shall differentiate yourselves by your saddles and your mounts, and you shall distinguish your and their headgear [*qalansuwa*] by a mark which you shall place on your headgear. You shall not occupy the middle of the road or the seats in the market, obstructing Muslims.

Every free adult male of sound mind among you shall have to pay a poll tax [*jizya*] of one dinar, in good coin, at the beginning of each year. He shall not be able to leave his city until he pays his poll tax or appoints someone to pay it on his behalf, with no further liability until the beginning of the year. The poor among you is liable for the poll tax, which should be paid for him. Poverty does not free you from any obligation, nor does it abrogate your pact [*dhimma*]... You are subject to no taxes on your money other than the poll tax as long as you stay in your country or travel around in the lands of the Muslims otherwise than as a merchant. You may in no circumstances enter Mecca. If you travel for trade, you shall pay to the Muslims a tenth part of all your merchandise. You may go wherever you wish in the lands of the Muslims, except Mecca, and reside wherever you wish in the lands of the Muslims, except the Hijaz,<sup>3</sup> where you may only stay for three days in any city, after which you must leave...

We owe you protection, for yourselves and for property which it is lawful for you to hold according to our laws, against anybody, Muslim or other, who seeks to wrong you, as we would protect our own persons and property, and we administer justice to you in matters under our jurisdiction as we do with our own property. But no one among you can ask us to protect any forbidden thing which you own, such as blood, carrion, wine, or pigs, as we would protect lawful property. We shall not prevent you from having them, but we shall not allow you to display them in the cities of the Muslims. If a Muslim or any other buys such merchandise, we shall not compel him to pay the price, because these are forbidden things and

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<sup>3</sup> A region covering the Western Arabian peninsula; this was the original Muslim "heartland" and the location of several of the holiest sites in Islam.

therefore have no price which could be legally enforced. But we shall restrain him from troubling you in this, and if he persists he shall be punished, though not by enforcing payment for what he took from you. You must observe all the conditions which we have imposed. You may not deceive a Muslim nor give aid to their enemies by word or deed. This is the pact and covenant of God, and the greatest obligation to respect this covenant which God has ever imposed on any of His creatures. You have the pact and covenant of God, the protection [*dhimma*] of so-and-so, Commander of the Faithful, and the protection of the Muslims to carry out their obligations toward you.

Those of your children who reach the age of puberty are in the same position as you are, in regard to what we have given to you and in the obligation to observe all the conditions which we have laid down for you.

If you change or modify anything, then the protection of God, of so-and-so the Commander of the Faithful, and of the Muslims shall be withdrawn from you. If anyone of those to whom we gave this was not present when we wrote it, and hears of it and accepts it, the conditions stated in it are binding on him and on us. If he does not accept it, we cast him out.

(Then list the witnesses).

## ***Siete Partidas***

*The following laws are part of the Siete Partidas, a long and elaborate legal code compiled by King Afonso X of Castile in the late thirteenth century. Alfonso was an energetic crusader against his Muslim neighbors as well as an active patron of cultural and intellectual life. The code as a whole attempted to incorporate Roman law, but the passages reproduced here reveal some of the special conditions of Reconquista Spain.<sup>4</sup>*

### ***Partida 7, Title 24. Concerning the Jews...***

#### **2. In What Ways Jews Should Pass Their Lives among Christians:**

Jews should pass their lives among Christians quietly without disorder, practicing their own religious rites, and not speaking ill of the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, which Christians acknowledge. Moreover, a Jew should be very careful to avoid preaching to or converting any Christian, to the end that he may become a Jew, by exalting his own belief and disparaging ours. Whoever violates this law shall be put to death and lose all his property...

#### **4. How Jews Can Have a Synagogue Among Christians: A**

synagogue is a place where the Jews pray, and a new building of this kind cannot be erected in any part of our dominions, except by our order. Where, however, those which formerly existed there are torn down, they can be built in the same spot where they originally stood; but they cannot be made any larger or raised to any greater height, or be painted. A synagogue constructed in any other manner shall be lost by the Jews, and shall belong to the principal church of the locality where it is built. And for

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<sup>4</sup> From S.J.Allen and Emilie Amt, *The Crusades: A Reader* (Broadview Press, 2003), 318-326; Source: trans. S. P. Scott, *Las Siete Partidas*, ed. R. I. Burns (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), Vol. 2, pp. 410-11, 516-18, 520; Vol. 5, pp. 1433-42, 1450.

the reason that a synagogue is a place where the name of God is praised, we forbid any Christian to deface it, or remove anything from it, or take anything out of it by force, except where some malefactor takes refuge there; for they have a right to remove him by force in order to bring him before the judge....

**5. No Compulsion Shall Be Brought to Bear upon the Jews on**

**Saturday:** Saturday is the day on which Jews perform their devotions, and remain quiet in their lodgings, and do not make contracts or transact any business; and for the reason that they are obliged by their religion to keep it, no one should on that day summon them or bring them into court. Wherefore we order that no judge shall employ force or any constraint upon Jews on Saturday, in order to bring them into court on account of their debts; or arrest them; or cause them any other annoyance; for the remaining days of the week are sufficient for the purpose...

**6. Jews Who Become Christians Shall Not Be Subject to**

**Compulsion:** ...if any Jew or Jewess should voluntarily desire to become a Christian, the other Jews shall not interfere with this in any way, [nor] stone, wound, or kill any such person, because they wish to become Christians...

**7. What Penalty a Christian Deserves Who Becomes a Jew:** Where a Christian is so unfortunate as to become a Jew, we order that he shall be put to death just as if he had become a heretic; and we decree that his property shall be disposed of in the same way that we stated should be done with that of heretics.

**11. Jews Shall Bear Certain Marks in Order That They May Be**

**Known:** Many crimes and outrageous things occur between Christians and

Jews because they live together in cities, and dress alike; and in order to avoid the offenses and evils which take place for this reason, we deem it proper, and we order that all Jews male and female living in our dominions shall bear some distinguishing mark upon their heads so that people may plainly recognize a Jew or a Jewess.

*Partida 7, Title 25, Concerning the Moors*

**2. Christians Should Convert the Moors by Kind Words, and Not by Compulsion:** Christians should endeavor to convert the Moors by causing them to believe in our religion, and bring them into it by kind words and suitable discourses, and not by violence or compulsion; for if it should be the will of our Lord to bring them into it and to make them believe by force, he can use compulsion against them if he so desires, since he [that is, God] has full power to do so; but he is not pleased with the service which men perform through fear, but with that which they do voluntarily and without coercion....

**4. What Punishment a Christian Deserves Who Becomes a Moor:**

Men sometimes become insane and lose their prudence and understanding, as, for instance, where unfortunate persons, and those who despair of everything, renounce the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and become Moors; and there are some of them who are induced to do this through the desire to live according to their customs, or on account of the loss of relatives who have been killed or died; or because they have lost their property and become poor; or because of unlawful acts which they commit, dreading the punishment which they deserve on account of them...Wherefore we order that all those who are guilty of this wickedness shall lose all their possessions, and have no right to any portion of them...;

## **Ibn Jubayr, *Travels*<sup>5</sup>**

and, in addition to this, we order that if any person who has committed such an offense shall be found in any part of our dominions he shall be put to death.

### **9. Moors Who Come on a Mission from Other Kingdoms to the Court of the King Should, with Their Property, Be Safe and Secure:**

Envoys frequently come from the land of the Moors and other countries to the court of the king, and although they may come from the enemy's country and by his order, we consider it proper and we direct that every envoy who comes to our country, whether he be Christian, Moor, or Jew shall come and go in safety and security through all our dominions, and we forbid anyone to do him violence, wrong, or harm, or to injure his property.

**10. What Penalty a Moor and a Christian Woman Deserve Who Have Intercourse with One Another:** If a Moor has sexual intercourse with a Christian virgin [or widow], we order that he shall be stoned, and that she, for the first offense, shall lose half her property, and that her father, mother, or grandfather shall have it, and if she has no such relatives, that it shall belong to the king. For the second offense, she shall lose all her property, and the heirs aforesaid, if she has any, shall obtain it, and if she has none, the king shall be entitled to it, and she shall be put to death...If a Moor has sexual intercourse with a Christian married woman, he shall be stoned to death, and she shall be placed in the power of her husband who may burn her to death, or release her, or do what he pleases with her. If a Moor has intercourse with a common woman [that is, a prostitute] who abandons herself to everyone, for the first offense, they shall both be scourged together through the town, and for the second, they shall be put to death.

*Abu 'l-Husayn Mohammed Ibn Ahmad Ibn Jubayr, a well-educated professional from the Muslim state of Granada in Spain, made a pilgrimage to Mecca in the early 1180s. His journey home took him north to Damascus and then through Frankish territory in order to catch a ship from Acre to Spain.*

...We passed the night of Friday in Darayah, a village belonging to Damascus, and one and a half parasangs from it.<sup>6</sup> We removed from there at daybreak on Friday to a village called Bait Jann, which lies among the hills. Thence we left, on the morning of Saturday, for the city of Banyas. Halfway on the road, we came upon an oak-tree of great proportions and with wide-spreading branches. We learnt that it is called "The Tree Measure," and when we enquired concerning it, we were told that it was the boundary on this road between security and danger, by reason of some Frankish brigands who prowl and rob thereon. He whom they seize on the Muslim side, be it by the length of the arms or a span, they capture; but he whom they seize on the Frankish side at a like distance, they release. This is a pact they faithfully observe and is one of the most pleasing and singular conventions of the Franks...

We moved from Tibnin—may God destroy it—at daybreak on Monday. Our way lay through continuous farms and ordered settlements, whose inhabitants were all Muslims, living comfortably with the Franks. God protect us from such temptation. They surrender half their crops to the

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<sup>5</sup> Introduction and source adapted from S.J. Allen and Emelie Amt, *The Crusades: A Reader* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003), 108-111. Source trans. R.J.C. Broadhurst, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr* (London:Junathan Cape, 1952), pp. 313-22.

<sup>6</sup> The parasang is a Persian measure of distance equal to about three miles.

Franks at harvest time, and pay as well a poll-tax of one dinar<sup>7</sup> and five qirat for each person. Other than that, they are not interfered with, save for a light tax on the fruits of trees. Their houses and all their effects are left to their full possession. All the coastal cities occupied by the Franks are managed in this fashion, their rural districts, the villages and farms, belonging to the Muslims. But their hearts have been seduced, for they observe how unlike them in ease and comfort are their brethren in the Muslim regions under their [Muslim] governors. This is one of the misfortunes afflicting the Muslims. The Muslim community bewails the injustice of a landlord of its own faith, and applauds the conduct of its opponent and enemy, the Frankish landlord, and is accustomed to justice from him.

On the same Monday, we alighted at a farmstead a parasang distant from Acre. Its headman is a Muslim, appointed by the Franks to oversee the Muslim workers in it. He gave generous hospitality to all members of the caravan, assembling them, great and small, in a large room in his house, and giving them a variety of foods and treating all with liberality. We were amongst those who attended this party, and passed the night there. On the morning of Tuesday the...18th of September, we came to the city of Acre—may God destroy it. We were taken to the custom-house, which is a khan [that is, a building] prepared to accommodate the caravan. Before the door are stone benches, spread with carpets, where are the Christian clerks of the customs with their ebony ink-stands ornamented with gold. They write Arabic, which they also speak...The merchants

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<sup>7</sup> The dinar was a gold coin minted by many Mediterranean states, equivalent to the Greek bezant.

deposited their baggage there and lodged in the upper story. The baggage of any who had no merchandise was also examined in case it contained concealed [and taxable] merchandise, after which the owner was permitted to go his way and seek lodging where he would. All this was done with civility and respect, and without harshness and unfairness. We lodged beside the sea in a house which we rented from a Christian woman and prayed God most high to save us from all dangers and help us to security...

Acre is the capital of the Frankish cities in Syria, the unloading place of ships...and a port of call for all ships. In its greatness it resembles Constantinople. It is the focus of ships and caravans, and the meeting-place of Muslim and Christian merchants from all regions. Its roads and streets are choked by the press of men, so that it is hard to put foot to ground. Unbelief and unpiety there burn fiercely, and pigs and crosses abound. It stinks and is filthy, being full of refuse and excrement. The Franks ravished it from Muslim hands..., and the eyes of Islam were swollen with weeping for it; it was one of its griefs. Mosques became churches and minarets bell-towers, but God kept undefiled one part of the principal mosque, which remained in the hands of the Muslims as a small mosque where strangers could congregate to offer the obligatory prayers. Near its *mihrab* [that is, a niche showing the direction of Mecca] is the tomb of the prophet Salih— God bless and preserve him and all the prophets. God protected this part [of the mosque] from desecration by the unbelievers for the benign influence of this holy tomb...

[Tyre] has become proverbial for its impregnability and he who seeks to conquer it will meet with no surrender or humility. The Franks prepared it as a refuge in case of unforeseen emergency, making it a strong point for

their safety. Its roads and streets are cleaner than those of Acre. Its people are by disposition less stubborn in their unbelief, and by nature and habit they are kinder to the Muslim stranger. Their manners, in other words, are gentler. Their dwellings are larger and more spacious. The state of the Muslims in this city is easier and more peaceful...

An alluring worldly spectacle deserving of record was a nuptial procession which we witnessed one day near the port in Tyre. All the Christians, men and women, had assembled, and were formed in two lines at the bride's door. Trumpets, flutes, and all the musical instruments were played until she proudly emerged between two men who held her right and left [hands] as though they were her kindred. She was most elegantly garbed in a beautiful dress from which trailed, according to their traditional style, a long train of golden silk. On her head she wore a golden diadem covered by a net of woven gold, and on her breast was a like arrangement. Proud she was in her ornaments and dress, walking with little steps of half a span, like a dove, or in the manner of a wisp of cloud. God protect us from the seduction of the sight. Before her went Christian notables in their finest and most splendid clothing, their trains falling behind them. Behind her were her peers and equals of the Christian women, parading in their richest apparel and proud of bearing in their superb ornaments. Leading them all were the musical instruments. The Muslims and other Christian onlookers formed two ranks along the route, and gazed on them without reproof. So they passed along until they brought her to the house of the groom; and all that day they feasted. We thus were given the chance of seeing this alluring sight, from the seducement of which God preserve us...

There can be no excuse in the eyes of God for a Muslim to stay in any infidel country, save when passing through it, while the way lies clear in Muslim lands. They will face pains and terrors such as the abasement and destitution of the *capitation* [that is, a tax on non-Christians] and more especially, amongst their base and lower orders, the hearing of what will distress the heart in the reviling of him [that is, Mohammed] whose memory God has sanctified, and whose rank he has exalted; there is also the absence of cleanliness, the mixing with the pigs, and all the other prohibited matters too numerous to be related or enumerated. Beware, beware of entering their lands.

### **Usamah Ibn Munqidh, *Memoirs*<sup>8</sup>**

*Usamah Ibn Munqidh, a Syrian prince and diplomat whose life spanned most of the twelfth century, wrote his memoirs as a collection of anecdotes drawn from his own experiences for the purposes of moral and practical instruction. He spent most of his later life in Damascus but he traveled extensively in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, and he had a wide circle of acquaintances.*

[The Christian King Fulk of Jerusalem] said to me: "O Usamah, by the truth of my religion, yesterday I experienced an exceeding great joy." I answered, "May Allah make the king joyful! What have you had to be joyful about?" The king answered, "I have been told that you are a noble knight. I hadn't the least idea that you were a knight." "My master," [I]

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<sup>8</sup> Introduction and source adapted from S.J. Allen and Emelie Amt, *The Crusades: A Reader* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003), 112-115. Source trans. G.R. Potter, *The Autobiography of Ousama*, by Ousama Ibn Mounkidh (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1929), pp. 86—87, 64—65, 172—73, 176—77, 184—85.

answered, "I am a knight after the manner of my race and my family" What they specially admire about a knight is his thinness and tallness....

Among the Franks who had been taken to my father's house [as captives] was an old woman with one of her daughters, young and well formed, and a stalwart son. The son became a [Muslim] and his [belief] was of a high standard as far as one could judge from his prayers and fasting. He learnt the art of working in marble in the school of an artist who paved my father's house in marble. Then, his stay there being prolonged, my father married him to a woman of a religious family and gave him everything that was necessary for his marriage and to set him up. His wife bore him two sons who grew up in the midst of us. They were five or six years old when their father, the workman Raoul, whose joy they were, set off with them and their mother, taking all he had in his house, to rejoin the Franks at Apamea. He became Christian again, together with his children, after years of [Islam], prayer, and faith. May Allah the most high cleanse the world of this race!

I will report some Frankish characteristics and my surprise as to their intelligence.

In the army of King Fulk, son of King Fulk, there was a respectable Frankish knight who had come from their country to make a pilgrimage and then return. He made my acquaintance and became so intimate with me that he called me "my brother." We liked one another and were often together. When he got ready to go back over the sea and return to his own country he said to me, "My brother, I am returning home and I should like, with your permission, to take your son with me to bring him to our countries." (I had with me my son, aged fourteen.) "He will see our

knights, and he will learn wisdom and knowledge of chivalry there. When he returns, he will have taken on the bearing of an intelligent man." My ear was hurt by his words, which did not come from a wise head. If my son had been taken prisoner, captivity could have brought him no worse fate than to be taken to the Frankish countries. I answered, "By your life, that was my intention, but I have been prevented by the affection that his grandmother, my mother, has towards my son. She let him leave with me only after making me swear to bring him back to her." "Is your mother still living then?" he asked. "Yes," I replied. He said to me, "Don't disappoint her."...

It is always those who have recently come to live in Frankish territory who show themselves more inhuman than their predecessors who have been established amongst us and become familiarized with the [Muslims].

A proof of the harshness of the Franks (the scourge of Allah upon them!) is to be seen in what happened to me when I visited Jerusalem. I went into the mosque al-Aqsa. By the side of this was a little mosque which the Franks had converted into a church. When I went into the mosque al-Aqsa, which was occupied by the Templars, who were my friends, they assigned me this little mosque in which to say my prayers. One day I went into it and glorified Allah. I was engrossed in my praying when one of the Franks rushed at me, seized me, and turned my face to the east, saying, "That is how to pray!" A party of Templars made for him, seized his person, and ejected him. I returned to my prayers. The same man, escaping attention, made for me again and turned my face round to the east, repeating, "That is how to pray!" The Templars again made for him and ejected him; then they apologized to me and said to me, "He is a

stranger who has only recently arrived from Frankish lands. He has never seen anyone praying without turning to the east.” I answered, “I have prayed sufficiently for today.” I went out and was astonished to see how put out this demon was, how he trembled and how deeply he had been affected by seeing anyone pray in the direction of the *qiblah* [that is, toward Mecca]...

The Franks understand neither the feeling of honor nor the nature of jealousy. If one of them is walking with his wife and he meets another man, the latter takes the woman’s hand and goes and talks to her while the husband stands aside waiting for the end of the interview. If the woman prolongs it unreasonably, the husband leaves her alone with her companion and goes [on his way]...

Among the Franks, we notice those who have come to dwell in our midst and who have become accustomed to the society of [Muslims]. They are greatly superior to those who have more recently joined them in the country which they occupy. They form, in fact, an exception which must not be made into a rule.

Thus, I sent one of my friends to Antioch to settle some business. At this time the chief of the city was Theodoros Sophianos. There were bonds of friendship between us. His authority prevailed in Antioch. One day he said to my friend: “I have received an invitation from one of my Frankish friends; come with me and see their customs.”

This is what my friend told me: “I went with him and we entered the house of one of the old knights who had come on the first Frankish expedition. He had been struck off the subsidy rolls and exempted from all military service, and in addition had been endowed with a fief at Antioch,

from which he obtained his livelihood. At his order, they brought in a magnificent table furnished with the purest and most perfect food. However, my host noticed that I abstained from eating. ‘Eat,’ he said to me, ‘you will find it good. For I do not eat Frankish food, but I have Egyptian cooks and eat only what they cook. Further, no pork ever comes into my house.’ I decided to eat, but with care. Then we took our leave of our host. Some days later, I was going through the marketplace when a Frankish woman attached herself to me, uttering barbarous cries in their language, and I did not understand a word that she was saying. A crowd gathered round me. They were Franks, and I began to feel that my death was near. Just then, this same knight appeared. He saw me, came up, and said to the woman, ‘What have you to do with this [Muslim]?’ ‘He is,’ she said, ‘the murderer of my brother Hurso.’ Now Hurso was a knight of Anamea who had been killed by a soldier from Hama. The Christian knight reproached the woman, saying, ‘You have before you a merchant, who does not fight, and is not even present at battles: He then reprimanded the assembled crowd, which dispersed. Then he took my hand and went with me. It was thanks to that meal that I escaped certain death.’”

### **Burchard of Mount Sion, *On the Holy Land*<sup>9</sup>**

*Burchard of Mt. Sion was a German Dominican friar who lived in Palestine from the mid-1270s to the mid-1280s. His description of the Holy Land is considered one of the most reliable and discriminating of the many pilgrim guides written by European visitors. Nevertheless, the following discussion of religions and ethnic groups contains much that is inaccurate.*

There are dwelling therein men of every nation under heaven, and each man follows his own rite, and, to tell the truth, our own people, the Latins, are worse than all the other people of the land. The reason for this, I think, is that when any man [in Europe] has been a malefactor, as, for example, a homicide, a robber, a thief or an adulterer, he crosses the sea as a penitent, or else because he fears for his skin, and therefore dares not stay at home. Wherefore men come thither from all parts — from Germany Italy France, England, Spain, Hungary and all other parts of the world; yet they do but change their climate, not their mind... They also breed children, who imitate the crimes of their fathers, and thus bad fathers beget sons worse than themselves, from whom descend most vile grandchildren, who tread upon the holy places with polluted feet. Hence it comes to pass that, because of the sins of the dwellers in the land against God, the land itself, and the place of our redemption, is brought into contempt.

Besides the Latins there are many other races there; for example, the Saracens, who preach Mohammed and keep his law They call our Lord Jesus Christ the greatest of the prophets, and confess that he was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. But they deny that he

suffered and was buried, but choose to say that he ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father, because they admit him to be the Son of God. But they declare that Mohammed sits on God's left hand. They are very unclean, and have as many wives as they can feed; yet, nevertheless, they practice unnatural sins, and have *ephebiae* [that is, brothels of young men] in every city. Yet they are very hospitable, courteous, and kindly.

Besides these there are the Syrians. The whole land is full of these. They are Christians, but keep no faith with the Latins. They are clothed most wretchedly, and are stingy, giving no alms. They dwell among the Saracens, and for the most part are their servants. In dress they are like the Saracens, except that they are distinguished from them by a woolen belt.

The Greeks in like manner are Christians, but schismatics... The Greeks are exceedingly devout, and for the most part greatly honor and revere their prelates. I have heard one of their patriarchs say in my presence, "We would willingly live in obedience to the church of Rome, and venerate it; but I am much surprised at my being ranked below the inferior clergy, such as archbishops and bishops. Some archbishops and bishops wish to make me, a patriarch, kiss their feet, and do them service, which I do not hold myself bound to do, albeit I would willingly do so for the pope, but for no one else."

There are also Armenians, Georgians, Nestorians, Nubians, Jacobites, Chaldeans, Medes, Persians, Ethiopians, Egyptians, and many other peoples who are Christians. Of those there is an infinite number. Each group of them has its own patriarch and obeys him...

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<sup>9</sup> Introduction and source adapted from S.J. Allen and Emelie Amt, *The Crusades: A Reader* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003), 121-124. Source trans. A. Stewart, *Burchard of Mount Sion* (London: Palestme Pilgrims' Text Society, 1896), pp. 102—08, 111, revised.

Moreover, there are in the Holy Land Midianites, who now are called Bedouins and Turcomans, who apply themselves solely to feeding flocks and camels, of which they have exceedingly great numbers. These people have no fixed dwellings, but wherever they learn that there is pasture, thither they go and pitch their tents. They are exceedingly warlike, yet only use swords and lances in battle. They do not use arrows, saying that it is base beyond measure to steal away a man's life with an arrow. They are brave in war, but wear only a red shirt, and over it a large flowing mantle, covering their heads only with a cloth...

Round about the castle of Arachas, beyond Tripoli, up to the castle of Krak des Chevaliers, dwell Saracens called Vannini. Adjoining them are the Saracens called Assassins, who dwell in the mountains beyond Antaradus near the castle of Margat. They have many castles and cities and a fertile land, and are said to have forty thousand fighting men. They have one chief not by hereditary succession, but by personal merit, who is called the Old Man of the Mountains not because of his age, but of his wisdom. These people are said to be of Persian origin. I have passed through a part of their country. They are obedient even to death, and at their superior's bidding slay anyone at all, and say that thereby they gain paradise, even if they themselves are slain before they have fulfilled their orders...The boundary between these people's land and that of the Christians is marked by some stones, on which on the side of the Christians are carved crosses, and on that of the Assassins knives. None of the sultans have hitherto been able to subdue them, but they make their own laws and customs and follow them as they choose. They are a terror to all the nations round about because of their exceeding fierceness.

Now, it must be noted as a matter of fact (although some, who like to talk about what they have never seen, declare the contrary) that the whole East beyond the Mediterranean Sea, even unto India and Ethiopia, acknowledges and preaches the name of Christ, save only the Saracens and some Turcomans who dwell in Cappadocia, so that I declare for certain, as I have myself seen and have heard from others who know, that always in every place and kingdom (besides Egypt and Arabia, where Saracens and other followers of Mohammed chiefly dwell), you will find thirty Christians and more for one Saracen. But the truth is that all the Christians beyond the sea are easterners by nation, and although they are Christians, yet, as they are not much practiced in the use of arms, when they are assailed by the Saracens, Turks, or any other people whatsoever, they yield to them and buy peace and quiet by paying tribute, and the Saracens, or other lords of the land, place their bailiffs and tax-gatherers therein. Hence it arises that their kingdom is said to belong to the Saracens, whereas, as a matter of fact, all the people are Christians save those bailiffs and tax-gatherers and their families...But they are men of simple and devout life; yet I do not deny that there may be fools among them, seeing that even the church of Rome itself is not free from fools...