

BETWEEN EAST AND WEST  
THE JEWS IN THE LATIN KINGDOM OF JERUSALEM 1099-1291

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“My heart is in the East and I in the uttermost West” wrote one of the greatest Hebrew poets of the Middle Ages, Judah Halevy of Spain, who went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land but never settled there<sup>1</sup>. Thus for the rest of his life he remained divided between East and West. This state of division between the Christian West and the Muslim East is typical of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Like most colonial states throughout history, this Kingdom was a society whose ruling class, the so-called Franks, — mainly the warriors of the First Crusade and their descendants — wanted their state to be a replica of the one they had left in the Christian West. They felt as if they had been transplanted by God from West to East and they therefore transplanted the institutions and norms of eleventh-century Europe to their Kingdom<sup>2</sup>. But neither the real location nor the native population could be totally ignored and rejected. Fulk of Chartres who wrote his *Historia Hierosolymitana*, a history of the First Crusade and the Kingdom of Jerusalem up to the year 1124, expressed this idea as follows:

“Consider, I pray, and reflect how in our times God has transferred the West into the East ... Our parents and relatives ... come to join us, abandoning, even though reluctantly, all that they possess ... You see, therefore, that this is a great miracle and one which must greatly astonish the whole world. Who has ever heard anything like it?<sup>3</sup>”

<sup>1</sup> *Selected Poems of Jehuda Halevi*, English trans. Nina Salaman (Philadelphia, 1946), no. 1; cf. “Ode to Zion”, no. 2; see J. Prawer, *The History of the Jews in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 143-146.

<sup>2</sup> J. Prawer, *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (London, 1972), pp. 503-533. *Idem*, “The Roots of Medieval Colonialism”, in *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*, ed. V.P. Goss *et al.* (Kalamazoo, 1986), pp. 23-38. “The Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem: The First European Colonial Society? A Symposium”, in *The Horns of Hattin: Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East — Jerusalem and Haifa 2-6 July 1987*, ed. B.Z. Kedar (Jerusalem and London, 1992), pp. 341-366. Thus e.g. Guibert of Nogent (d. 1121), referred to the Kingdom as to “Holy Christendom’s new colony”: Guibert of Nogent, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, 7, 25, RHC Occ., I, p. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Fulk of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, 37, RHC Occ., III, pp. 467-468.