

Anna Gutgarts

POST DOCTORAL PROJECT PROPOSAL FOR THE ZVI YAVETZ SCHOOL OF
HISTORICAL STUDIES

Land Distribution and the Formation of Society and Local Identities in the Latin East:

The society formed in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem following the First Crusade was an immigrant society, shaped by shared values and founding myths. Over time, it underwent significant changes that affected its structure and the social cohesion among its members. The proposed study will investigate the makeup of this society using a new prism: the dynamics of land transactions, perceived as essential in formulating and consolidating communal and institutional bonds. A systematic analysis of land transaction records from the 12th-13th centuries, applied for the first time to the full corpus of the Frankish documents, will demonstrate how the patterns of distribution of the newly conquered and inhabited land shaped the social structures formed by the Western settlers, and their sense of attachment to their new home in the East. This approach will provide a new prism to address some of the main issues in the scholarship concerning the Frankish society and its development. For example, it will demonstrate how complex patterns of land distribution reflected social response to changing geo-political circumstances, particularly the fall of the First Kingdom in 1187, and the turmoil of the second half of the 13th century leading to the loss of the Latin Kingdom in 1291. Through its novel approach to the Frankish documents, this study will also offer a comparative framework that will allow analyzing the Frankish society vis-à-vis other case studies presenting similar characteristics, thus providing a better understanding of concepts of social cohesion in the medieval Mediterranean.

Hitherto, studies of the characteristics of the Frankish society have focused on its religious and cultural affiliations, its political alliances and the formation of distinct feudal structures. Therefore, the analysis of land transactions was conducted predominantly in particular regional contexts. Drawing on concepts developed in the scholarship of land exchanges in the medieval Latin west, and expanding them with newly developed methodologies for a wide-ranging analysis of historical

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data, I wish to propose an additional framework for the examination of land exchanges in the Latin east. This framework will focus on the attachment to the land, as a terrain of interplay between local-communal and wider ethno-cultural and political structures.

As amply shown in the scholarship, medieval gifts and exchanges of landed property expressed and shaped different facets of personal and social affiliations, since they were determined by ties of class and kinship, institutional allegiances, religious commitments, and economic constraints. Following this perspective on medieval land distribution, I propose regarding land transactions in the Frankish Levant as an important resource that can provide a *longue durée* perspective on the process of self-fashioning of Frankish society.

This study establishes itself on the methodology developed in my dissertation, which, through the examination of urban development in the city of Jerusalem under Frankish rule, aims to open new research venues for the study of the cultural and socio-economic history of the Latin Kingdom. Drawing on this methodology, which relied on a database incorporating information from all the extant Frankish documents, and extending its chronological, geographical and theoretical applications, the current study will trace the formation of social networks by analyzing land exchanges and patterns of settlement. It will focus on the diverse strategies applied by the Latin settlers in various types of land transactions to form different levels of social, economic and institutional networks.

Therefore, the first stage of the proposed project will focus on the expansion of the database, and the analysis of the patterns that will emerge from the data. This analysis will be based on the mapping of land distribution, reconstruction of social networks, and the examination of institutional and economic tendencies. I propose that only vast cross-sectioning of records of various types of property transactions conducted among different members of the Frankish society and various

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Frankish institutions, can show how diverse types of attachment to the land yielded tensions between micro-regional allegiances and broader overlapping socio-economic, institutional and cultural structures.

For example, local villagers could affiliate with a religious community by taking an oath tying them to an ecclesiastical institution, which then became entitled to certain rights in their lands. However, they could simultaneously engage in land exchanges with that institution in order to consolidate their families' patrimony. A tripartite nexus could thus be formed, embedded with tensions between obligation to a communal oath, religious association and familial ties. Systematic analysis of the emergence of such overlapping bonds and networks will unveil the flexibility of social, institutional and economic alliances, both vertical and horizontal, and their correlation to the changing realities of Frankish dominion.

The vast, yet clearly defined scope of the available documentation, coupled with the unique historical circumstances of the Frankish Levant and subsequently the broad historical questions that they allow us to address, potentially make this a particularly rewarding case study. The proposed approach to analyzing and cross-sectioning the documents allows us to reconstruct and trace important aspects and phases of the complex reality of a newly formed society - its efforts to develop ruling mechanisms rapidly, and to use these mechanisms to strengthen social cohesion. This analysis can also shed new light on the changing mentalités of the Frankish settlers, and the transition from a sense of unity that was entrenched in the eschatological and religious zeal that had driven the First Crusade, to a different perception of social cohesion, one that could promote the establishment of the Latin Kingdom as a distinct geo-political and institutional entity.

The evidence of land transactions is particularly valuable in this regard. It allows us to address the gaps and tensions between the society's changing norms and ideals, and its practical responses

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to socio-economic and geo-political vicissitudes. For example, patterns of property donations to religious institutions, particularly in times of crisis, may reflect the social resilience of devotional communities. However, the uncertainty and social unrest may surface in alternative forms of land transactions, reflecting a gradual breakdown of other social structures.

The new plotting of the data extracted from the Frankish documents, as suggested in this study, will allow the employment of notions from the fields of network analysis and the sociology of community, and comparison with other medieval societies with similar structural and institutional characteristics; these will inform my analysis of the settlers' interconnectedness through the land they inhabited. Furthermore, the examination of the structural characteristics and socio-economic and institutional dynamics of the Frankish settlement, will allow this study to engage in the broader theoretical context of settler economies. Therefore, the second phase of the project will focus on the formulation of a comparative framework, that will consider cases that demonstrate resemblances in their institutional structures and in the documentation of property distribution during the examined period, as well as cases with similar geo-political circumstances.

Such a comparative framework will also aim to examine the evolution of Frankish administrative and bureaucratic mechanisms in a wider perspective, against the backdrop of other case studies in France and in England that demonstrate institutional, economic or legal similarities. A close scrutiny of various aspects of legal documentation, such as the changing patterns of legal formulae, will provide a deeper understanding of the connection between the shifts in legal and administrative practices, and the social formations that they were shaping, and to which they were responding. This supplementary course of inquiry will provide a fresh perspective on the key issues in the historiography of Frankish Levant, namely the development of the Frankish bureaucratic and legal mechanisms, particularly in their early stages, and their social implications.

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The focus on administrative and legal mechanisms and their comparison with similar mechanisms outside the Latin Kingdom will extend the scope of the examination of the formation and development of Frankish social cohesion. By raising new questions concerning the transmission of bureaucratic knowledge to and from the medieval Levant, the juxtaposition with other case studies will provide a new integrative framework for examining processes of acculturation and cultural exchange in the Latin East, and pose this issue within the broader context of the medieval Mediterranean.