Echoes of the East

Crusader Imitations of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

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Abstract
Within this paper I explore the path through which cultural exchanges moved between the East and the West during the Era of the Crusades. Starting with the movement of material goods and societal changes brought about by innovation within the religious holy orders – the Knights Templar and the Hospitallers – the topic of this emphasizes the meanings behind Crusader imitations of the Holy Sepulchre. The goal of this research is to analyze the significance of key elements of imitated from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre’s architecture, the complexities of how these churches rarely resemble one another in the eyes of the modern beholder and what the differences in their appearance meant to a medieval person, to pinpoint the reasoning behind the creation of such churches and to explain why they were used as an alternative to the mainstream European style of church architecture. Constructing this type of architecture revolves around imitating Christ, his tomb, and the Church that surrounds it, and also emphasizes the importance of Jerusalem for the purpose of parallel worship in the Medieval Catholic world.
Remembered for their violent encounters between Christian Europe and the Islamic East, the Crusades also stand as an example of how conflict can lead to change. The innovations and interactions brought about by the Crusades, serve as examples of how Western Medieval ideas and religious beliefs could change as a result of major events and encounters. This paper demonstrates how ecclesiastical architecture was one of the mediums through which crusading values are transmitted from East to West.

A major product of the Crusades was the increase of Eastern influence in the West, which can easily be attributed to the West’s increased involvement in Eastern affairs; the Crusades gave opportunity to vast numbers of people from a variety of societal backgrounds to travel to the East, increasing Western exposure to new cultures. This research relies heavily upon examples of cultural changes and exchanges that happened within crusade inspired “organizations.” In the context of this paper, I define cultural change: as a new concept created within the crusader culture; whereas, an exchange occurs through a foreign concept or object being integrated into Western culture. For example, an instance of change would be a shift in focus from saints and their cults, to the Holy Family, while an example of exchange would be the introduction of foreign goods into Medieval European markets. While many of these changes and exchanges suggest Eastern origin, some can be attributed to innovations generated within crusading communities that are then adapted to the rest of European society. These innovations illustrate how ideas are transferred throughout Europe through crusader organizations.

The objective of this research is to isolate certain kinds of cultural changes and exchanges. Reaching this goal begins with the formation of the Military Orders – the Knights Templar and the Hospitallars – and how they functioned as a path through which both changes and exchanges traveled. This first section will discuss a number of different examples that suggest certain limited types of cultural changes and exchanges, brought about by crusading holy orders through innovation and the movement of material goods between the East and the West. The second section applies the concepts of limited change and exchange to architecture by highlighting examples of architecture that either failed to be adapted from the East or was adapted, but not with intended symbolic significance. The third section discusses a cultural shift in the way medieval people constructed architecture and draws comparisons between Crusader style and standard gothic style of architecture. This section also focuses on my the central finding: a specific type of church architecture that focuses upon Jerusalem and explores the implications of creating imitation churches. This type of architecture strongly embodies and conveys the theoretical ideas developed by the crusading holy orders in the East, which was then manifested in material form in the West. It reveals a shift in the way ecclesiastic buildings were constructed, a change realized through the concepts brought about by crusading holy orders. Furthermore, this type of architecture brings instances of cultural change and exchange together in a single form by pairing the use of foreign concepts to express a change in cultural focus. The intention behind constructing this type of architecture revolves around the desire to imitate Christ, his tomb, and the Church that surrounds it and also emphasizes the importance of Jerusalem for the purpose of
parallel worship in the medieval Catholic world. Before turning to architectural examples, this paper will discuss the broader context of cultural changes and exchanges within medieval society during the era of the crusades.

The examples of changes and exchanges between the East and the West start not with buildings, but with people and how holy orders acted as agents of cultural change. During the Crusades, new monastic orders rose to prominence. These military holy orders, the Knights Templar and the Hospitallers, acted as a vector through which changes and exchanges moved and spread to medieval society. Groups like the Templars and Hospitallers developed with a primary focus on Jerusalem. As the influence of these groups expanded, they built institutions throughout Europe; these served as a reminder to the medieval Catholic world of the importance of the Holy Land by linking the East and the West together and made that all the more powerful through a network of innovations and changes.

Before groups like the Templars and Hospitallers could begin spreading their influence in Europe, a series of cultural shifts needed to occur. As these organizations grew in popularity, the newly found military holy orders drew strong support from crusading advocates, as well as religious and secular elites and thus, began to spread their ideas back to Europe. For example, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, an extremely influential abbot during the Crusading Era, praised these military orders. His treatise “In Praise of the New Knighthood” reveals a cultural shift in the way Medieval Europeans identified chivalry when he states,

This is, I say, a new kind of knighthood and one unknown to the ages gone by. It ceaselessly wages a twofold war both against flesh and blood and against a spiritual army of evil in the heavens…He is truly a fearless knight and secure on every side, for his soul is protected by the armor of faith just as his body is protected by armor of steel. He is thus doubly armed and need fear neither demons nor men. Not that he fears death—no, he desires it… The knight of Christ, I say, may strike with confidence and die yet more confidently, for he serves Christ when he strikes, and serves himself when he falls.

Through this writing, new ideas now affiliated with militaristic orders, such as the Templars, were described, supported, and dispersed. Although St. Bernard of Clairvaux was not a Templar himself, his emphasis on how groups of Crusaders should function, reveals how the values of medieval culture evolved by using these new organizations as role models. This iconic image of the new knighthood from the perspective of an outsider, shows how the lifestyle and values of a militaristic order influenced the community surrounding it.

Religious support even came from the highest ranking elite in the medieval Catholic world, the Pope. After the founding of the Templar order, Pope Innocent II issued a papal bull that granted the Templars certain privileges as an organization. This bull had a profound effect on medieval European society because it granted members of the Templars remission from sins and
exemption of tithes; it also granted the Templars the privilege of having clerics join their order. The issuing of this bull represents the social shift that allowed the Templars to have the same rights and capabilities as the church itself. These privileges represented various opportunities for the members and those associated with the order.

Other forms of church law show a similar focus towards empowering these crusading groups. Pope Innocent’s *Omne Datum Optimum* helped emphasize the ideal of crusaders by supporting participation in the combination of religious and military orders. In this bull, Pope Innocent addresses the current Grand Master of the Temple saying, “we ordain that on your death, Robert, beloved son in the Lord, or that of any of your successors, none of that same house shall be put at the head of the brothers unless he be both a military and religious person who has made profession of the habit of your brotherhood.” The requirement of being both religious and militaristic reveals a shift in European focus to the liberation and sustenance of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Furthermore, it ensures that the Templars will become a permanent military institution dedicated to the Church. These cultural changes took effect through the influence of theological thought taking place in Western Europe during the crusading era. The rise of crusading knights such as the Templars reveals an altered medieval thinking towards knighthood. The Templars serve as a vector through which this mindset spread.

Secular elites, kings, and nobles supported the military orders by providing land and other forms of wealth. Even the very first Templar Headquarters, a wing of the Al Asqa Mosque, known by the Crusaders as the Temple of Solomon, was provided to them by the generosity of King Baldwin II of Jerusalem. As the custom of providing land and buildings to these groups began to develop, and as holy orders began to increase in their numbers, this custom spread to Western Europe. Castles, along with the lands surrounding them, were granted to these holy orders, providing groups like the Templars and the Hospitallers with wealth and the military power of fortresses. The increase of land holdings easily allowed these groups to spread their influence throughout the medieval Catholic world.

The original intention of the Knights Templar was to escort pilgrims safely through the Latin East, while the Hospitallers filled the niche of housing the pilgrims and maintaining the hospitals of the Levant. As a result of new needs and growth in wealth, these military orders also began to serve as standing armies. Later, kings and other nobles would employ them to occupy important castles. Exactly this use of the holy orders as standing defenders of important sites can be demonstrated in the grant of the castle of Grañena by Raymond Berenguer III, the Count of Barcelona, in the year 1130 and the grant of the castles of Monzón, Mongay, Chalamera, Barbará, Corbins, and Remolins by Raymond Berenguer IV, in the year 1143 to the Templars. The practice of granting castles to the Templars occurred in the Latin East in 1166, with King Alamric’s grant of the castle of Ahamant. On the other hand, the Hospitallers were granted the “boader fortresses of Raphanée, Mont ferrand, Mardabech, Le Crac des Chevaliers and La Bochée, with all the lands dependent upon [the castles for defense].” The granting of these
castles was done to protect the boarders and frontiers of the Crusader States. The granting of castles to the Templars would ensure a loyal army at these locations, which proved to be a valuable defensive asset to Catholic leaders throughout the East and the West.

The rapid growth of support from the highest levels of medieval society and the acquiring of land from their supporters allowed ideas and materials to begin to make their way through the network of Templar and Hospitaller headquarters throughout Europe. The following examples demonstrate the many ways change and exchange transferred throughout areas where holy orders held influence. Because architectural trends followed a similar path, they also illustrate how innovations and changes had the potential to become universal in areas where holy orders held influence. While support from secular and religious elites eventually cleared a path through which architectural influence was able to move freely, the movement of material goods transpired first.

The movement of materials between the East and the West through holy orders was primarily for economic purposes. Since Europeans had a foothold in the Middle East, they also gained a great trade advantage within the Mediterranean. Controlling of a small portion of the Levant gave Europeans easy access to Oriental and Middle Eastern goods such as spices, medicines, dyes, and luxury textiles. By examining tax codes of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, one can extrapolate the vast amount of trade and foreign goods that the Middle East had to offer, including pepper, ivory, silk, incense, and sugar. Philip D. Curtain, a historian of the African and Atlantic slave trade, describes the benefits of trading sugar:

Cane sugar products have a high value-to-bulk ratio. This means that they could be transported for long distances, especially by relatively cheap water transport, and still sold at profit. Economically, therefore, sugar could enter long distance trade over far greater distances than wheat, rice or other starchy staples in common use.

Although Curtain credits the Venetians for building up the European sugar trade in the East, through the use of Eastern sugar cultivating technology, he also mentions that the crusaders followed suit and began to build sugar plantations of their own, for example Baldwin II’s plantation near Acre and the holy order plantations near Tripoli. Although this involvement in trade partly explains why military orders like the Templars gained economic power, it also reveals that these groups participated in the movement of material goods that was occurring between the East and the West through the Levant.

Other economic innovations were developed by these groups and exemplify the movement of new ideas through crusader communities. After spreading to England, the Templars quickly established their reputation for providing financial services in the city of London. The same year that the Templar headquarters in London was consecrated, King Henry II deposited money with the Templars for safe keeping. Other sources reveal how storing valuables with the Templars
became popular amongst members of English Royalty. Eleanor of Province, the Queen of Henry III, for example, left a cherished poem describing the deeds of crusaders with the Templars for safe keeping, Geoffrey of Lusignan, Henry’s half-brother, left a chest at the Temple and Henry stored his best wine there so it would be in good condition when archbishops arrived for visits. Other sources show that this service was not only offered to royalty in London but to royalty of other kingdoms as well; for example, James I of Aragon deposited jewels with the Templars in Monzón. Tithe deposits were also entrusted to the Templars, as in the case of the crusading tithe stored in the Temple at Paris in 1281. These various accounts of royalty trusting the Templars with riches displays a universality of services offered by the Templars in the Catholic world.

These services were not the only ones offered; along with safe keeping, the Templars functioned as money lenders for land owners. In several cases, the Templars offered a chance for people to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. These opportunities were made possible through a loan system where an individual would put their property under the Templars protection, and the Templars would fund their journey. Examples of this exchange promise, were the cases of Peter Desde and his wife Elisabe from Zarragoza and Pons Lautier of Colonzelle. If the person to whom the money was being loaned to did not return home, the Templars would then often inherit the land. On the other hand, loans could be repaid over time, with the person that the Templars loaned money to, paying it back in material form. This was the case of William Torre and his wife, who paid the Templars their loan back in the form of barley, vegetables, wheat, and other goods. These examples also show how loaning money was another universal practice of the Templars throughout Medieval Europe.

While the preceding examples explore various ways in which the holy orders brought either materials or ideas to the West, this paper focuses mainly on architecture, as buildings enabled the manifestation of theoretical ideas in material form. One of the most significant ways that crusading organizations affected the communities around them, was in the conceptualization and creation of architecture. The holy orders made a permanent expression of what they believed to be most important about European interactions with the East by constructing buildings from stone. Within the crusading holy orders, theoretical significance was the driving factor for the transfer of specific architecture to the West. When the crusaders imitated architecture the importance of changes within medieval society tend to trigger exchanges, or the adaptation of foreign architectural features. While some cultural shifts took place as a result of the growth of holy orders and Western involvement in the Levant, they represented changes from East to West which were adapted for reasons of functionality, economic benefit, or unintended motivations. Changes to church architecture however were designed to create deliberate imitations of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. In other words, there were key forms of architecture borrowed from the East, intentionally taken by the crusaders and reused in Europe for their specific symbolic meanings.
Not all architecture is created equally, however, and to aid in illustrating that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was the primary focus of the crusader interest and therefore was copied, this paper will now turn towards a discussion of early debate and architectural examples that were not copied for specific meaning, but rather were taken either for functionality or adapted unintentionally. This section of the paper will focuses on the early debate about castle architecture, as well as key elements of Gothic design that became widely used in Europe and appeared to have Eastern origins but did not carry iconographic meaning as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre imitations did. The following architectural examples reveal instances of limited or failed exchange, as where the Holy Sepulchre imitations serve as examples of how the important changes and exchanges from the Crusades came together in crusader church architecture.

Although holy orders like the Hospitallers and the Templars were widely known for castle building, castles do not carry the same significance as ecclesiastic structures and adaptations were made for functional reasons. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as European engagement with the Levant intensified, scholars looked for ways to trace cultural movement from East to West. For example, early studies of castles pitted two scholars, Sir Charles Oman and T. E. Lawrence, in a debate. The works of Oman and Lawrence concerned whether or not architectural influence traveled between the East and the West through the approaches that holy orders used to build castles. Oman’s studies on medieval castle design can be found in his book, The History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages, a two-edition work that focuses on the years 378 to 1278 and 1278 to 1485. According to Lawrence, Oman references a Frankish encounter with Manuel Comnenus that surprised the Franks with the effectiveness of Byzantine military architecture. From here the Franks began copy the style of Byzantine castles regardless of the fact that they despised the Byzantines. This theory revolves around the idea that castles in the West were directly affected by architectural advances in castle building originated in the East, as the crusaders copied the Byzantines’ curtain towers. These towers provided a flanking opportunity for the walls that Oman also credited to the Byzantines.

It was not until nearly a decade later that Oman’s thesis was challenged by the archeologist T. E. Lawrence, who studied evidence from both Eastern and Western built castles from the same period. Lawrence’s examination focuses on the various features of European castles prior to the crusades and compares them side-by-side to the castles erected by the crusaders in Syria. In doing so he attempts to pinpoint the origin of different castle building techniques. Lawrence came to the conclusion that rather than the greatest castles built by crusaders being influenced by Byzantine structures, that instead, they had been directly influenced by French and Italian castle building techniques. Byzantine inspired fortresses were not built in Western Europe until after the crusades were over. Lawrence’s method of proving his thesis lies in the study of castle design. His work deals primarily with continental European castles, and makes a clear argument of a distinct architectural flow of influence from West to East.
In his book, *Crusader Castles*, Lawrence points out that the crusaders built traditionally Western style castles in Syria during their early travels. Later, as they grew more powerful, the two major knightly orders divided to create their own styles of castle architecture. The Templars diverged from their Western origins and began to build in a style that drew influence from the Byzantine Empire, while the Hospitallers continued to keep Western styled designs for their castles. One example that Lawrence addresses is the Hospitaller castle, Crac Des Chevaliers. Crac Des Chevaliers can be identified as Western in style by its rounded curtain towers, but most particularly through the employment of machicoulations, or murder holes, a pattern that Lawrence saw as intended in the original plan for the castle. Lawrence challenges the standard belief that machicoulations were developed in the East by comparing them to the Templar pseudo-Byzantine designs that never adopted this feature in any of their castles. More recent scholarship notes that the construction of castles cannot be as easily categorized as either Oman or Lawrence had hoped, and points to evidence of both groups using a variety of castle building techniques for the purpose of functionality.

It appears through the early research of these two historians that the primary focus behind the construction of castles was functionality, as they did not serve as an effective medium through which important crusader messages could be transmitted. This research will now turn towards other examples of architecture that have Eastern origins but, like castles, fail to reflect significant symbolic meaning. This next category centers on particular architectural features that may have been used in Crusader churches, but do not carry significant symbolic meaning and therefore, are further examples of limited change and exchange.

While examples of architectural techniques with a distinct meaning had been taken from the East, other architectural techniques were adopted unintentionally. Although there are certain qualities of Crusading Era medieval churches in the West that distinctly point to the importance of Jerusalem, there are also many examples of architectural techniques borrowed from the East that seem to have lost their meaning, if they ever had any. Unfortunately, lack of documents and lost knowledge on the subject of how Eastern methods shaped the West remains a substantial problem and often leads to topical quagmires. An example of how lost information can be problematic is the tomb of Hubert Walter (c.1160 – 13 July 1205), the archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of Richard I. While Walter served Richard I during his Crusade as a correspondent to Saladin, and made several journeys to the Holy Land, very little is known about his tomb. Within Trinity Chapel, across from the tomb of the Black Prince, lies the modest tomb of Hubert Walter adorned with a series of four faces on its front. Tourist tradition maintains that the face furthest to the left possesses Islamic features. The face stands out from the other three faces as it has different headwear and a beard but, is this face of a specific person? What does this face signify? While it is plausible that the face is Eastern, all is speculation without further research.
As England houses many gothic style buildings, it is debatable as to whether or not these buildings are all examples of Eastern architectural methods that were borrowed. The English architect Christopher Wren acknowledges the Eastern origins of the popular medieval style of architecture saying,

This we now call the Gothic manner of architecture (so the Italians called what was not after the Roman style) though the Goths were rather destroyers than builders; I think it should with more reason be called the Saracen style, for these people wanted neither arts nor learning: and after we in the West lost both, we borrowed again from them, out of their Arabic books, what they with great diligence had translated from the Greek.

Looking closer at the way churches were constructed, it is evident that Eastern influence trickled down into structural features of medieval buildings. Over the years speculation as to whether or not the pointed arch is inherently Islamic, and its effect on the origin of gothic style architecture has taken place. This seemingly arbitrary architectural development could not have been more influential. The pointed arch opened the door to taller, thinner, stronger arches and is a key element in Gothic style architecture.

In a short article, “Gothic Architecture and its Persian Origins,” Martin S. Briggs reviews the general argument for the belief of gothic architecture and its Persian origins through the work of Dr. Arthur Upham Pope. This study shows evidence of vaulting, buttresses, domes, and arches frequently used in gothic architecture having first been experimented within the Middle East centuries before its application to important structures in Western Europe. Through the work of Briggs, Pope proposes the possibility that these architectural features developed in Europe independently from their development in the East. Evidence of European church architects spending time in the East, coupled with foreign architectural practices, appearing around the time of the crusades strengthens their thesis supporting the belief that common gothic techniques were borrowed from those used in the Near East.

Jaroslav Folda, an art historian whose research focuses on crusader art, also argues that certain qualities of gothic architecture were inspired by the East. Through his study on the Holy Sepulchre, he describes its choir as “one of the most progressive parts of the newly rebuilt Crusader church with its graceful pointed arches and its four-part rib-vaulted bay.” In the heart of Crusader Jerusalem, lies one of the first examples of the West borrowing an architectural technique from the East, as the choir on the Holy Sepulchre is one of the earliest examples of crusader architecture. Folda suggests that these pointed arches were Eastern in origin by tracing the inspiration to the late eighth century Ramla Cistern, Bir al-Aneziyya, or the cistern of St. Helena as named by the crusaders. While the pointed arch is used frequently in Islamic architecture, other research suggests that the pointed arch was a method originally used by the Greeks, and was preserved by Arabian scribes. Few existing arches from Byzantine-controlled
areas of Syria and Turkey still remain. These findings suggest evidence that prove the origins of the pointed arch were developed somewhere other than Western Europe. Given this knowledge, one might wonder how a foreign architectural technique became so popular in the West and if there was any significance behind the pointed arch’s adaptation.

It seems that the architecture the Crusaders adapted from Islamic architecture faced one of two fates. The first possibility would be that the crusaders adapted a method of architecture, such as a rotunda, while the Islamic architects of the East utilized a similar method and both groups applied their own iconographic meanings to these designs. The equivalent example in Islamic architecture would be the Dome of the Rock, which according to Robert Hillenbrand, also “reinterprets a standard type of Byzantine centralized commemorative building intended for pilgrimage. Its central rock evokes Arabian litholatry, associations of the Creation and the Last Judgment, and Muhammad’s Night Journey to Heaven.” The example of the Dome of the Rock exemplifies how certain architectural features branched off into different meanings from a similar prototype based on the creators of the new structure.

On the other hand, an adapted method of architecture may lose its meaning completely. Evidence suggests that early uses of the pointed arch in Islamic architecture held significant meaning as the feature was a primary aspect in the construction of the Dome of the Rock. Although the meaning behind the use of the arch is unclear today, the arch became a typical feature of secular Islamic architecture during the eighth and ninth centuries. As architectural historian, Peter Draper suggests, “by the late eleventh century Romanesque architecture reached a stage of elaboration that created a demand for, or at least made patrons and craftsmen receptive to, a new range of decorative features and motifs.” Crusaders that witnessed the pointed arch adopted it for its exotic value and for aesthetic reasons rather than theological purposes.

The use of the pointed arch appears to be an unconscious adaptation of an Eastern style. Draper explains,

> If it was known, there does not seem to have been any barrier to their adoption, such as the initial reservations expressed in the fifteenth-century Renaissance about the propriety of borrowing from pagan precedents for Christian monuments. Once the pointed arch started to spread in Western Europe it is unlikely that there was any continuing awareness of its Eastern origin.

This observation raises the question of the structural features that have Eastern origins: could it have been possible for crusaders to have been oblivious to the origins of other Eastern styles, such as the shouldered arch, (which developed from experimentation with the pointed arch), and chevron patterns? Examples of both of these designs can be seen in Fountains Abbey and Durham Cathedral respectively. Furthermore, these two features developed to serve a decorative purpose rather than the pointed arch which clearly developed into a highly functional piece of
architectural technology. Neither of these arches became as common as the pointed arches during the Middle Ages, but they still suggest an Eastern influence.

While the shouldered arch can be built in a variety of shapes and sizes the two that can be found in the ruins of Fountains Abbey would be variants of a flattened tri-lobbed arch and flattened shoulder arch. A group of filled-in, flattened tri-lobbed arches are in the cloister of the abbey, suggesting their use was primarily decorative. The flattened shoulder arches at the abbey are found in the warming rooms. The arches fill the space once occupied by pointed arches. While the history of shouldered arches has been traced to the Middle East, it is possible that these arches were derived from Eastern prototypes, as tourist tradition maintains that they have Eastern origins.

A similar account can be told about the chevron patterns found in other parts of English churches. The earliest confirmed chevron patterns in England are in the Durham nave, the Norwich nave, the Hereford choir, and the Peterborough choir, all of which date between the years 1110 and 1117. However, the chevron pattern appears to be a basic technique used in English Romanesque architecture, meaning that unlike designs such as the shouldered and pointed arch, these patterns arrived during the beginning of the Crusading era, if not earlier. David and Camilla Edwards point out in the footnotes of their article “The Evolution of the Shouldered Arch in Medieval Islamic Architecture” that the chevron motif can be spotted on a shaft from Lanfranc's dormitory at Canterbury, dating around 1080. Though tourist tradition and academic work maintain that these patterns have been copied from a prototype in the East, it remains difficult to trace their origins as Chevron patterns have been adapted throughout Europe, the East, and are widely used in Africa.

While many of these Eastern adaptions of style appeared in England during the time of the crusades, the architectural methods lacked significant meaning that can be traced to Christian iconography or were adapted without any symbolic meaning. However, did their styles have meaning as features of Islamic architecture? It would be inevitable for the crusaders to experience numerous examples of architecture built by enemies of the faith. The architecture borrowed from the East was meant for veneration, and therefore, it is likely that any architectural styles known to be Islamic would have faced a resistance similar to the reservations that had been expressed towards the borrowing from pagan precedents for Christian monuments during the fifteenth century. While memento architecture was reserved for paralleled veneration of the Holy Land, the crusaders would not have welcomed the architecture of the Islamic world to their houses of worship.

Although decorative patterns, such as variations of shouldered and pointed arches and chevron patterns, may have originally held an iconographic meaning, any such meanings behind their adaption has been lost, failing to transfer to the West once these designs had been borrowed. Like the pointed arch, the shouldered arch and chevron patterns were most likely adapted for
aesthetic reasons rather than for a symbolic purpose. This lack of symbolic meaning does not suggest that these architectural features were not given a distinct theological significance after they were used in the West, but it does show that there was no significance behind their initial adaptation. The key features of the crusader churches that imitate the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, on the other hand, do carry a specific meaning and were copied to emphasize that significance. Therefore, the iconographic implications carried set these features apart from the other architectural examples previously mentioned.

The era of the crusades during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was one of the first instances in which a massive group of secular and even ecclesiastic Europeans encountered Eastern cultures and the Holy Land in person. The result of these encounters was a notable increase of Western mimicking of Eastern architectural styles, specifically imitations of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The goal of the remainder of this paper is to emphasize the importance of the imitations of one of Christianity’s most important medieval sites, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The second half of this paper will first establish which of the Holy Sepulchre imitations are studied in my research, and then examine how the imitation churches built by crusading holy orders, not only revolve around the importance of Jerusalem, but provide an alternative iconographic meaning to that of their gothic contemporaries. These examples demonstrate a way that cultural changes, such as the medieval shift in focus towards the Holy Land, and exchanges; like the use of foreign architectural designs, from the Crusades combine through architecture.

Ecclesiastical architecture during the crusades can be viewed as a metaphorical melting pot for medieval buildings in the East and the West. One example of this syncretism of styles is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. This church was the most important church to any crusader, as it marked the place of Christ’s crucifixion, entombment, and resurrection: “It was the object of countless pilgrimages and the ultimate inspiration for the Crusades.” As Crusaders arrived, they would contribute architecturally through repairs and additions to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The largest addition to the church that the Crusaders were responsible for is the Crusader Choir, dedicated in 1149. While crusaders employed the use of the European Romanesque arch, this example reveals that they incorporated the use of popular local architectural techniques such as the pointed arch as well.

Robert Ousterhout notes that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre had gone through several reconstruction phases. Despite the lack of published archeological evidence and the fact that the Byzantine version of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre may have been short-lived, Ousterhout points to it as the most influential church to the Crusaders. The crusaders’ exposure to a building that carried such substantial meaning as the Holy Sepulchre, led to the reproduction of several churches that were explicit, although never exact, copies. Ousterhout also highlights the Eastern influence on such churches saying,
On a local level, it helped to establish the form of the Crusaders' building and suggested a number of structural and decorative details for the 12th-century additions. In relationship to Western European architecture, the Byzantine Holy Sepulchre corresponded with a period of considerable contact between Palestine and the West. Seen by participants of pilgrimages and the First Crusade, it inspired the numerous memento Holy Sepulchres that were constructed in the 11th and 12th centuries, such as S. Stefano in Bologna and the Holy Sepulchre in Cambridge, England.

Figure 1: Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Cambridge

Within the legal district of London lies the Temple Church, this was originally constructed by the Knights Templar, in the year 1185. Shortly after the First Crusade, the order of the Templars was established, which grew rapidly in followers and power, allowing them to venture out of the Holy Land and construct churches as headquarters throughout Europe. Since the church experienced a great amount of damage during the Blitz of the World War II and only a small fraction of the original structure remains, the current building is, for the most part, rebuilt. Regardless, the reconstructed building was built in a way that was true to the original design.

Perhaps the oldest standing imitation of the Holy Sepulchre in England, is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Northampton. The story of this church connects it to the first crusade. The land that the church stands on belonged to Earl Simon de St. Liz, who was one of the newly appointed nobles under the reign of William the Conqueror. When the call for the First Crusade was issued by Pope Urban II, the Earl Simon de St. Liz answered the call. Having taken arms, journeyed to the Holy Land, and participated in the sack of Jerusalem, the Earl then completed his pilgrimage and successfully returned to England. The Reverends J. Charles Cox and R. M. Serjeantson suggest that

To earl Simon de St. Liz, one of the most powerful and wealthy of the new nobility of England, the rebuilder of Northampton and the founder of its castle, a great benefactor of religious houses and a most faithful son of the church, an earnest crusader, and a devout pilgrim, the first erection of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre of Northampton may with considerable confidence be assigned.

Furthermore, the work on the Norman church is believed to have been constructed around the year 1100, meaning that the work would have begun under the Earl Simon de St. Liz’s control of Northampton, even if the consecration of the church may not have been until after 1108. It is still the earliest of the English imitations of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The problem with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Northampton is, that while it appears evident that the commissioner of the building could be named, there is no concrete evidence that Simon de St.
Liz constructed it. If he did, however, this example stands apart from the others as it would have a single patron and was not built by an organization of crusaders, as many of the other churches were.

Lastly, little is known about the origins of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Cambridge, also known as the Round Church, which was founded by a monastic order known as the Confraternity of the Holy Sepulchre. The church was built within the first quarter of the twelfth century. While it can be determined that the other three churches were directly related to the Crusades, as their patrons are known and fairly well documented, this conclusion cannot be achieved regarding the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Cambridge. Due to the absence of evidence, it is unclear as to whether or not the Confraternity of the Holy Sepulchre had a direct link to the crusades. However, their Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Cambridge has an indubitable connection to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

The Hospitallers, like the Templars, built their own tribute to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in England. They were the patrons of the Church of St. John of Jerusalem in Little Maplestead, and the current church situated in this location is a recreation of the original building, which dates to the fourteenth century. The original, which would have been a contemporary to the other three churches, dates approximately to the same time as the Templars Church in London. Unfortunately, it is unknown as to whether or not the original church had the same design as the current church. Furthermore, since information on the origins of the Maplestead Church is limited, this paper will focuses more on the other two churches; the Temple Church and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Cambridge. Despite the missing information on the history of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Cambridge, it has been thoroughly studied and therefore, reveals important architectural features that the imitation churches hold in common. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Cambridge provides insight into the minds of the medieval groups that built these imitation churches. The study of these churches also explains why medieval people chose the crusader alternative to ecclesiastic architecture.

While architectural iconography is by no means new to Europe, the imitations of the Holy Sepulchre supplied alternatives to the mainstream iconography of ecclesiastic architecture. During the High Middle Ages, the organizational tendencies and patterns of many Christian thinkers began to influence the construction of the Medieval Cathedral. A similar pattern can be spotted within the creation and organization of Cathedral structure and ornamentation as was done through the writings of medieval scholasticism. According to historian Erwin Panofsky, “the High gothic cathedral sought to embody the whole of Christian knowledge, theological, moral, natural, and historical, with everything in its place and that which no longer found its place suppressed.” Through his research, Panofsky explores the way that these concepts reoccurred throughout medieval architecture stating, “[it is not very probable that the builders of Gothic structures read Thomas Aquinas], But they were exposed to the Scholastic point of view in innumerable other ways, quite apart from the fact that their own work automatically brought
them into a working association with those who devised the liturgical and iconographic programs.” As this type of pattern between the builders of ecclesiastical structures manifested the point of view of those who desired the construction of the building, it becomes clear why the crusaders took a different iconographic approach to the architecture of their churches. Through a comparison of how other ecclesiastic architecture was built to convey a specific meaning to the strategies used to communicate the significance of the Holy Sepulcher, historians can understand how medieval people shared concepts they believed were important through the permanence of stone.

Abbot Suger of St. Denis, wrote about the ornamentation and construction of his abbey, located just north of Paris. The construction of St. Denis, the first gothic abbey, and Abbot Suger’s writing about the consecration and administration of the building affected the way medieval builders thought about ecclesiastic architecture and contributed to the mainstream iconographic approach to architecture of the High Middle Ages. Within the abbey of St. Denis, lighting played an important role in emphasizing the beauty of the building as well as providing a sense of Christian enlightenment. The purpose for allowing more light into the structure was to promote learning within the church through the stained glass. During Abbot Suger’s modifications to the abbey, stained glass windows were added as parts of the ornamentation and also served as an important factor in the organization of the abbey as each of the windows in the abbey focuses on biblical tales. Abbot Suger suggests that through the light that comes through these windows urge visitors of the abbey to focus on the immaterial, through the inspiration that the material objects supply and, adds to the incorporation of a summation of Christian knowledge within the architecture of the building.

The concept of utilizing light as an important tool in the construction of a church does not pertain only to St. Denis, but can also be seen in the construction of the Temple Church in London. However, the Temple church takes an alternative route in developing its light choir. As historian Nikolaus Pevsner stated, “It is in fact one of the most perfectly and classically proportioned building of the [thirteenth century] in England, airy, yet sturdy generous in all its spacing, but disciplined and sharply pulled together.” Through the Temple Church’s openness of the architecture, the effect of light is brought to the choir. Historian Virginia Jansen elaborates on the method in which the Temple Church employs light as an architectural feature:

Especially striking are the qualities of openness and spaciousness, today bringing an overall effect of bright lightness to the choir. These traits follow from the choir’s structure, defined as a hall church; that is a form with three or more aisles of generally equal height, so that the walls of the centre aisle lack the clear storey that characterises the basilican form. This construction means that the relationship between central vessel and side aisles is more regular and that lighting comes from windows placed only on the periphery. It usually allows a more even tonality to permeate the building.
While stained glass is not mentioned by Jansen, it appears that architecturally utilizing stained glass as a method to light the church was not the priority of the Templars. When constructing the church, the holy order used architectural techniques that do not feature the windows but rather feature the concept of light permeating throughout the structure. While lighting was an important technique across Western Europe in church building, developing techniques differing from the stained glass described by Abbot Suger, the architecture used in the Temple Church appears not to emphasize the importance of the windows as they were in the Abbey of St. Denis. Due to the destruction caused to the church during the Second World War, the application of lighting and how its employment to convey iconographical topics is difficult to determine. However, judging by the use of peripheral architecture to illuminate the building, the importance of such windows is deemphasized and the emphasis of drawing a parallel to Jerusalem remains the primary objective of the architecture of the Temple Church.

While the work of Abbot Suger’s gothic design has unique architectural meaning, other gothic masterpieces emerged across Europe, with each one possessing as intricate a design as the last. The architectural features of the Gothic Cathedral further revolved around what Dominican scholar Thomas O’Meara refers to as the “summa mindset,” which can be seen in writing, music, and the architecture of this time period. This “summa mindset” functioned as part of the medieval zeitgeist and served as a model for organization. While many medieval Gothic cathedrals, churches, and imitations of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre use elements of this type of organization, the interpretations of how this organization should be represented architecturally tended to vary slightly. A wide variety of Holy Sepulchre imitations, as well as Gothic churches and cathedrals emerge, because of differing methods of representing important iconographic elements.

In architectural historian Richard Krautmeier’s “Iconography of Medieval Architecture,” he compares the architectural features of several memento Sepulchre churches. This study reveals the complexities of the different kinds of Sepulchre imitations. Krautmeier examines several of the early churches that were consecrated in the name of the Holy Sepulchre and identifies the challenge of viewing these buildings through the eyes of the medieval people who constructed and wrote about them. Often he draws comparisons between churches that appear to have no relationship to one another, which may contribute to errors, but these comparisons seem to happen too frequently and therefore, the only reasonable answer would be that medieval people possessed a completely different concept of how one building related to another.

By examining a group of churches built in dedication to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre ranging in dates from the ninth to the early twelfth century that seem to have no visual relation to each other, let alone their prototype church in Jerusalem, Krautheimer formulates connections between the various churches. While the most obvious trait amongst the copy churches is the rotunda, a feature that all English imitations have in common with the Jerusalem church, Krautheimer describes how various shapes were not properly differentiated as polygons. Shapes
with more than four sides were often referred to as circular, as squares and rectangles were not clearly defined as being different from semi-circles. Other inaccuracies, such as dimensions of the ground plan and height of supporting columns can be attributed to poor understanding of geometry, inaccurate measurements, or poor descriptions.

Within the construction of Gothic churches and cathedrals, sacred numerology and geometry were important factors. Many Gothic churches and cathedrals were concerned with integrating biblical and theological shapes and patterns into their construction, varying from the cruciform shape to the application of reaching the “divine height.” The Church of the Holy Sepulchre imitations contains a similar set of numerical and geometric meanings that reference their prototype church in the East. Ousterhout emphasizes that the importance of these imitation churches did not lie in the visual exactness of the copy but rather in the religious significance. This inaccuracy can be seen in the creation of churches like the Round Church in Cambridge, which has eight interior supports rather than the eight piers of the original church and instead of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem’s twelve interior supports; the original Round Church had six aisle windows and six triforium windows, totaling twelve.

One common trait among the construction of churches and cathedrals included the use of sacred geometry, numerology, and spatial factors, not only within the structure but also within a community. While there are distinct features of churches that required a certain level of accuracy in order to convey meaning during their construction, “It would seem as though a given shape were imitated not so much for its own sake as for something else it implied.” In other words, the reasoning behind the imprecision of geometrical imitations stems from the meaning behind what a group of shapes implied, making this significance more important than geometrical accuracies. For example, the cruciform shape, which signifies Christ’s victory on the cross, often appears throughout medieval churches. It can take the form of a “t” shape or even the symmetrical Greek cross shape. The specific dimensions of the cross were irrelevant; what mattered was that the church was in the shape of the cross, and in some cases, this definition was even looser as the cruciform shape could be applied to a pattern of how churches were laid out in a city.

The Holy Sepulchre and its imitations hold a different meaning but share the same method of understanding symbolism. The Holy Sepulchre does not convey the same meaning of the cruciform shape but instead carries an alternative meaning by its structural layout. Certain features of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem contained significant theological meanings that may or may not have been applied to the Sepulchre after its construction. Regardless of whether or not these meanings were applied to the Holy Sepulchre post festum, or after its construction, as in the case of the crusader churches, Christian theological interpretations had already given to the shape of the church long before the First Crusade. Therefore, the significance of the Sepulchre’s features must have returned to Europe with the Crusaders and been applied to the imitation churches constructed in Western Europe.
The key meaning and shape referred to here would be the iconic rotunda, a feature that the memento churches share. Christian interpretations of the rotunda form date back to St. Augustine, who saw the circular form as a symbol of virtue, and Eigil, who viewed “the circle [as] a symbol of the Church, never ending and containing the sacraments; also it signifies to him the reign of eternal majesty, [and] the hope of future life.” The rotunda was not always geometrically accurate, as with other shapes, nor was it the only inconsistency among the copies of the Holy Sepulchre.

The number of supports within the church also held an important meaning. The Holy Sepulchre has a total of twenty supports, twelve column supports from the interior of the church and eight piers in the main axis. Both numbers carry a theological significance, with the number twelve signifying the Apostles as well as being able to be broken down into multiples of three and four which signified the trinity and the four Evangelists. The number eight related to the resurrection, and in some cases, compared to the beatitudes. In the copy churches, either eight or twelve was the chosen number to emphasize the imitation. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Cambridge, for example, has eight columns in its interior. In some instances, the number eight may even explain the octagonal shape of the rotunda.

Since creating identical copies of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was not as important as the iconography behind certain attributes in the architecture of the building, which resulted in the variety of seemingly different churches consecrated in reference to the Holy Sepulchre that carry similar meanings. Beyond imitating the specific iconography of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, why would medieval people consecrate churches in the name of the Holy Sepulchre? This question goes beyond iconography and explores deeper meanings of practice and worship within these churches.

O’Meara’s study of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae* draws upon further similarities of organization between Medieval Gothic architecture and the writings of the Christian theologian:

Both gothic architecture and Aquinas’ theology pass through the three dimensions of time. The past is prominent in the prophets, apostles, and philosophers whose thought is symbolized in their statues. The present moment is one of contemplation, of the application of the art’s symbols and narratives to oneself. The future exists ahead and above: not as the continuation of the line of history but as a world beyond time and as a fulfillment of incarnation: spirit in stone, color in glass and air.

A similar outlook can be applied to the imitations of the Holy Sepulchre; by creating an architectural parallel to the church in Jerusalem, the buildings draw on the Holy Land’s past, present, and future importance to the people of the West. The past importance relates to Christ and the Biblical significance of Jerusalem or even served as a reflection of the Holy Land as a whole, or location where the holy orders were founded. The present and future moments of the
crusader churches likely served a similar purpose as any other Gothic church, although, they also served as locations to build support for future Crusades, with the goal of maintaining the present and future state of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.

A further technique that medieval builders employed was to use layout and spatial features of that conveyed a specific concept. Building layouts and town planning were techniques used to imply certain theological meanings and, in some cases, imaginary replications of Jerusalem. Historian Keith Lilley writes that the idea of medieval landscapes implied iconographic meanings. One way that imaginary environments were created was through the processions of early Christian practice as in Jerusalem, Rome, and Constantinople. Lilley references how the stations of Christ’s passion continued to be imitated within the urban communities of Rome so that Christian people could practice a form of pilgrimage. According to Lilley this practice reveals that

Such traces through the urban landscape no doubt inscribed it with symbolic, Christian meanings to those who were there, but what is perhaps of more significance here is how these perennial religious processions traced out, in the minds of participants, the mystical, symbolic forms of city and cosmos – the micro- and macro-cosm – connecting themselves, spiritually and bodily, to the broader social 'body' of the city and to the 'cosmic body' overall.

While medieval people practiced the imagining of the landscape of Jerusalem through religious practice, it is clear that through the architecture of the Holy Sepulchre imitations, medieval people also tried to re-imagine place through the construction of buildings. Ousterhout describes the attempts that medieval people made recreate Jerusalem in Bologna with a Sepulchre styled church and how other Sepulchre imitation churches attempted to follow the same path to recreate the holy place.

This custom of medieval people utilizing local houses of worship to create imaginary experiences instead of going on a pilgrimage, takes a different form in the creation of Holy Sepulchre imitation churches. In Ousterhout’s article “Architecture as Relic and the Construction of Sanctity: The Stones of the Holy Sepulchre,” he elaborates on the complex religious significance behind the architectural relation to worship and ritual. He references the writings of St. Jerome, who stated "Whenever we enter [the Tomb of the Lord], we see the Savior lying in the shroud. And lingering a little we see again the angel sitting at his feet and the hand-kerchief wound up at his head." These writings signify how medieval people believed that the power of a relic could bring someone to the time-significant event while in the presence of such a relic. In this case, entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to see the Tomb of the Lord can spiritually transport the faithful to the time of His death. The same occurrence materialized in other writings of St. Jerome’s with a friend of his named Paula. When visiting the relic of the true cross in Golgotha, "she fell down and worshipped…as if she could see the Lord hanging on it."
Ousterhout explains that the site of such important religious events was permanent and therefore visiting the location of such a significant event to venerate a relic became a part of the ritual. A similar adaptation can be said for the architecture built on the now holy ground: “For architecture did not simply house sites and rituals, it glorified and magnified them, it authorized and validated them, and it ultimately became part and parcel of the ritual experience.” The process of the ground, and thus the architecture of the site becoming holy, can be illustrated in the words of historian Sarah Blick, whose studies of holy locations and the tradition of pilgrims venerating the ground of these locations as a form of secondary relic, referred to such locations as having “holy radioactivity.” In this process, the architecture that houses such a relic highlights the relic’s importance and amplifies the tradition of the relic’s veneration, as well as making the building itself a reliquary and relic.

Constructing a copy of a holy site, such as the Holy Sepulchre may have led to a situation where the imitation might have been venerated in relationship to the prototype. Such a comparison can be seen through the tombs of Thomas Becket that once stood within the walls of Canterbury Cathedral and Edward the Confessor at Westminster Abbey. Art Historian Stephen Lamia’s study of the tombs of England’s greatest medieval saints draws comparisons between the two saints. Both Edward the Confessor and Becket’s tombs have a unique feature: they are pierced, thus allowing pilgrims visiting their tombs to kiss the sarcophagus in an act of veneration. Initially, the proximity of their canonizations, may seem to highlight the two men in comparison with one another; one a saint of the cross, and the other a saint of the crown. This “canonization of the opposition,” a term coined by historian Paul Binski, highlights the rivalry between the church and state. Although this comparison is a likely reason behind the similarity of the two tombs, Lamia points to a parallel outside of England: the tomb of Christ himself.

Although Becket’s tomb no longer exists owing to its destruction to the reign Henry VIII, speculations can be made about what the tomb looked like, judging from descriptions of the tomb and the appearance of the tomb in manuscripts and the stained glass depictions of the tomb in the Trinity Chapel in Canterbury Cathedral. Shortly after Becket’s death a new Prior, known as Benedict, took charge of managing pilgrimages and recording the miracles that took place at the tomb of Becket. As a avid supporter of Becket’s cult, Benedict aided in the organization of the construction of a polygonal rotunda meant to house the shrine of Becket. Historian M. F. Hearn’s article on Canterbury Cathedral and the Cult of Thomas Becket describes how this rotunda structure was modeled in the style of the Byzantine Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a method similarly used at the Temple Church in London. Placing the shrine in such housing, it could be argued, symbolically draws parallels between Becket and Christ. The construction of the rotunda, however, was halted, and new plans for the shrine’s housing adopted. Nevertheless the plan to build a rotunda housing the tomb reveals part of the cult’s agenda for the veneration of Becket, and that such parallels were possible in the medieval mindset.

Figure 2: Trinity Chapel Stained Glass
Lamia applies these comparisons to the tomb of Edward the Confessor by making three conclusions:

The concept of Edward the earthly king has its counterpart in the concept of Christ, King of Heaven. The tomb of the canonized King of England was located in the capital city of his realm, as the tomb of Christ was in the heart of the Christian world. As a king, Edward was dispenser of the laws of his Church through his vicars on earth.

Clearly, the parallels drawn between Christ and saints have adopted a strong iconological and symbolic meaning, strengthening the veneration of such saints and their churches. Just as the embellishments on their tombs mimicked Christ’s prototype tomb holds significant meanings that draw parallels between saints and Christ, the same strategy applies toward different architectural techniques that were borrowed from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Therefore, English imitations of the Holy Sepulchre draw symbolic parallels similar to those used on the English saints’ tombs.

Ultimately, the vast number of concepts and materials moving between the East and the West during the Crusades can be attributed to the popularity of the holy orders that mirrored the excitement generated by the Crusades. Crusading era architecture in the West stands as an example of how the material and the conceptual ideals of the crusaders came together and provided an alternative method of constructing iconographic messages in buildings by imitating specific architectural features encountered during the Crusades. Although, there are examples of architecture that can be considered Eastern that are not used in ecclesiastic architecture, these examples were often adapted either unintentionally or for aesthetic or exotic value. The medieval architecture that was intentionally brought to the West that resembles Eastern designs is meant to parallel Jerusalem, but more specifically parallel the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Although these foreign architectural examples are applied to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre imitations with the same intentions as other Gothic structures, they highlight a different category of medieval thought, which other instances of changes and exchanges do not express. That is the crusader imitations of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre focused upon the importance of Jerusalem within the Medieval Catholic World and the reproduction of Jerusalem in the West.
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