

Notes for the Maps of the Levant

These Notes need to be used in conjunction with the various maps shown of the areas of the Levant, through which the 1st Crusade passed & subsequent Crusaders newly arrived in or continued to live.

They give a description of the landscapes, the peoples that lived in these areas

Geography of Medieval Levant

This map gives the overall view of eastern Anatolia, northern & southern Syria, Galilee & the Judaeen & Oultrejourdain areas. The importance of this map is to show you the respective areas of the landscape, which are coloured to help to see them clearer. Most settlements had some form of stone wall, to allow the local populations to find shelter during a raid. If an army leaves any of the Trackways, the Umpire will roll a D6 dice to see if it gets lost in the deserts & any following actions will be imposed on it.

Syria can be divided up into **five** quite distinct longitudinal zones. From west to east these are...

1. **The Mediterranean Coastal Plains** (shown on the map in green). They extend to a max. of approx.. 15 miles in the south, a mixture of sandy tracts & cultivated land, together with some woodlands
2. **The Heavily Forested Mountainous Highlands** (shown on the map in black). These areas comprise the Taurus, Ammanus, Ansariyya, Lebanon & Galilean ranges, rising up gradually on the west to approx. 5000 feet in northern Syria, 9800 feet in Lebanon & almost 4000 feet in Palestine. This area has many natural springs, villages & cultivated areas. The eastern slopes falling away in a steep descent to the third zone
3. **The relatively populated region** (shown on the map in yellow). This land comprises a long, deep like trench made up of the rivers Orontes, Leontes (Litani) & Jordan. Valleys & continued in the south by the Wadi el-Arabah, which forms a natural frontier
4. **The Highlands** (shown on the map in brown). These comprise the Moab, the Jaulan & the anti-Lebanon ranges. A bleak plateau which has though large forests & many fertile, well-watered spots, especially in the more northerly regions around Damascus, Homs, Hamah & Aleppo
5. **The Waste** (shown on the map as Jazira, Syria Deserta, Arabia Deserta & the Arabia Petrarea), these are the Great Syrian Deserts. A broad plateau 3000 feet above sea level, part gravel-strewn, part sandy & part hard-caked with whitish glittering dried mud. This area is covered all year round by a layer of red-tinged, grey-green plants. There are a few oasis in these areas, nestled among the few palm trees

Forest Areas - Much of these lands were uncultivated, although many were at one time inhabited & cultivated, but now lay desolate. Most forests were in truth, open woodlands with little undergrowth. Large forests were still present though in Judaea & the Jaulan. Around Beirut, the forest stretched 12 miles in every direction

Cultivated Areas - However, the cultivated areas yielded a vast array of crops, chief among these being olives, grapes & wheat. Most of the larger towns & cities were surrounded by their own irrigated orchards & vineyards, plus many local fruits. The orchards of Tyre were reported to stretch to Homs, each area producing two crops per year

Seasons - Syria though had a very distinct pattern of wet & dry seasons. From the end of October, heavy showers appear, loosened the dry cracked soil & opened the agricultural year. Daily rain storms then appeared until they began to lessen in March & early April. During this period many springs & streams appear, providing From May, until the following October, rain became very scarce. During the summer heat, many settlements used water wheels to provide water from wherever a water source was. Some areas however, such as around Jerusalem, Nablus, Jaffa, Jericho, Gaza, Caesarea & Ibelin do not require irrigation, receiving sufficient moisture in summertime from the morning dew. This dew is also accompanied by a hazy mist

Temperatures - Mean summertime temperatures are around 25C in July & August, with a max. of 40C at midday. May is normally 18C, June & September 23C, October 20C. November to February average out at 10C. During the Sirocco winds however, when the winds blow in from the deserts, which brings in fine grains of sand & can veil the Sun out, scorching vegetation & bringing languor & fever to humans. These winds typically occur over a 50-day period, each wind storm blowing for a 1-2 day period during the months of April & May. The sand can cover an entire camel caravan, if it is caught in the open. Also during the winter months, ground above 3000 feet can be covered in snow for several months of the year

Peoples of the Levant – The Levant was inhabited by a mixture of people, whose individuality resulted from their various religious convictions, rather than their ethnic differences. Generally they were **Seven** different groups, with the Syrian Christians increasing the further north one went

Christian, Jewish & Heretical groups

1. **Maronites** – From Lebanon, these were the most privileged group. This was due to the fact that they were not only Christians, (as after 1182AD acknowledged the Pope in Rome as their religious leader), but were also excellent soldiers
2. **Syrian Christians** – This group had many religious differences, some being Copts, Jacobite's, Nestorians & Armenians, so were not as well respected by the Crusading armies or Western clergy. They wore beards, dressed in Arabic clothing & were either of the Greek Orthodox church or heretical in their beliefs. For the ignorant 'Franks' of the Crusades, they found it hard to discriminate between the Muslims & these Christian groups, many being slaughtered, raped & pillaged when a town or city fell to the Crusaders. The largest of these groups were the Cilician Armenians, whom the crusaders called 'Hermings', a dour & gloomy group who the 'Franks' saw as either good, bad or indifferent
3. **Jews** – The various Jewish communities were seen as untrustworthy by the Muslims, despite the fact that they usually bore arms in defence of their settlement, principally in Jerusalem & Haifa against any crusading army. They were therefore massacred as keenly as any Muslim. However, once the Crusader States were in place, no pogroms occurred and their communities in Ascalon, Tyre, Acre, Beirut, Sidon, Caesarea & other Galilean towns increased. However, any new Crusaders that came from the West, still had the loathing & bigotry against the Jews when they arrived

Islamic Groups & Bedouins

4. As there was a religious schism in Christianity between the Roman Catholic & Greek Orthodox churches, so there was within Islam. Here the two main groups were **Sunni & Shia**. The Sunni Muslims believed that the first four caliphs were rightfully appointed, whereas the Shiites believe that that the **Prophet Mohammed** appointed his cousin & son-in-law **Ali**, as his successor. This schism led to potential conflicts between the two groups when they met. The **Fatimids of Egypt** were also **Shiite** Muslims, whereas the **Seljuk Turks of Anatolia** were all **Sunni** Muslims
5. **Druzes** - The Druzes of Mount Hermon were neighbours to & bitter enemies of the Maronites of Lebanon, being themselves Shiite Muslims
6. **Assassins** – The Assassins were a powerful group, who became known as expert assassins, killing both Christian & Muslim leaders or individuals, if they were well paid & convinced of the righteousness of the killing. They were Shiite Muslims
7. **Syrians** – The majority of the Syrians were Sunni Muslims, except in Galilee & Transjordan lands, where Shiites
8. **Bedouins** – These desert dwelling tribesmen of Judaea, Sinai, the Negev desert, Arabia & the Great Syrian desert, who acknowledged no borders, often raided both Christian & Muslim camel caravans. The tribes practiced a mixture of polytheism, with Animism (where objects, places & creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence) & idolatry being common. They venerated various deities & spirits, with some like Hubal & the Goddesses al-Lat, al-Uzza & Manat being the most common. Some tribes will have been aware of Judaism or Christianity, Islam had not become the dominant power, as it had among both Arabs & Turks

Cilicia & Northern Syria

This map shows the area of south eastern Anatolia & northern Syria. All the trackways are shown with a numbered list of all the settlements. Each settlement is numbered & described in the List of Settlements document on the Triples website, on the Maps of the Levant page. When moving towards any objective settlements, you will need to inform the Umpire of the settlement numbers & state any deviations if the trackway does not connect two points

Southern Syria

This map shows the area of southern Syria. All the trackways are shown with a numbered list of all the settlements. Each settlement is numbered & described in the List of Settlements document on the Triples website, on the Maps of the Levant page. When moving towards any objective settlements, you will need to inform the Umpire of the settlement numbers & state any deviations if the trackway does not connect two points

Galilee

This map shows the area of Galilee. All the trackways are shown with a numbered list of all the settlements. Each settlement is numbered & described in the List of Settlements document on the Triples website, on the Maps of the Levant page. When moving towards any objective settlements, you will need to inform the Umpire of the settlement numbers & state any deviations if the trackway does not connect two points

Judaea & Oultrejordan

This map shows the area of Judaea & Oultrejordan, showing the access routes in to and out of Fatimid Egypt. All the trackways are shown with a numbered list of all the settlements. Each settlement is numbered & described in the List of Settlements document on the Triples website, on the Maps of the Levant page. When moving towards any objective settlements, you will need to inform the Umpire of the settlement numbers & state any deviations if the trackway does not connect two points