



To Follow in Their Footsteps: The Crusades and Family Memory in the High Middle Ages

Nicholas L. Paul

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When the First Crusade ended with the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, jubilant crusaders returned home to Europe bringing with them stories, sacred relics, and other memorabilia, including banners, jewelry, and weapons. In the ensuing decades, the memory of the crusaders' bravery and pious sacrifice was invoked widely among the noble families of western Christendom. Popes preaching future crusades would count on these very same families for financing, leadership, and for the willing warriors who would lay down their lives on the battlefield. Despite the great risks and financial hardships associated with crusading, descendants of those who suffered and died on crusade would continue to take the cross, in some cases over several generations. Indeed, as Nicholas L. Paul reveals in *To Follow in Their Footsteps*, crusading was very much a family affair.

Scholars of the crusades have long pointed to the importance of dynastic tradition and ties of kinship in the crusading movement but have failed to address more fundamental questions about the operation of these social processes. What is a "family tradition"? How are such traditions constructed and maintained, and by whom? How did crusading families confront the loss of their kin in distant lands? Making creative use of Latin dynastic narratives as well as vernacular literature, personal possessions and art objects, and architecture from across western Europe, Paul shows how traditions of crusading were established and reinforced in the collective memories of noble families throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Even rulers who never fulfilled crusading vows found their political lives dominated and, in some ways, directed by the memory of their crusading ancestors. Filled with unique insights and careful analysis, *To Follow in Their Footsteps* reveals the lasting impact of the crusades, beyond the expeditions themselves, on the formation of dynastic identity and the culture of the medieval European nobility.

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