



Good day Worthy Knights, in this part 114, the Saracens

Wikipedia

They were primarily Arab Muslims, but also Turks or other Muslims as referred to by Christian writers in Europe during the Middle Ages. The term's meaning evolved during its history. In the early centuries of the Christian Era, Greek and Latin writings used the term to refer to the people who lived in desert areas in and near the Roman province of *Arabia Petraea*, and in *Arabia Deserta*.

Early usage and origins

Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical history* narrates an account wherein Pope Dionysius of Alexandria mentions Saracens in a letter while describing the persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperor Decius: "Many were, in the Arabian mountain, enslaved by the barbarous 'sarkenoi'.

These Saracens, located in the northern Hejaz, were described as people with a certain military ability who were opponents of the Roman Empire and who were classified by the Romans as barbarians.

Medieval usage

No later than the early fifth century, Christian writers began to equate Saracens with Arabs. Saracens were associated with Ishmaelites (descendants of Abraham's older son Ishmael) in some strands of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic genealogical thinking. The writings of Jerome are the earliest known version of the claim that Ishmaelites chose to be called Saracens in order to identify with Abraham's "free" wife Sarah, rather than as Hagarenes, which would have highlighted their association with Abraham's "slave woman" Hagar.

As the Middle Ages progressed, usage of the term in the Latin West changed, but its connotation remained negative, associated with opponents of Christianity, and its exact definition is unclear. In an 8th-century polemical work, John of Damascus criticized the Saracens as followers of a false prophet and "forerunner[s] to the Antichrist."

By the 12th century, Medieval Europeans used the term *Saracen* as both an ethnic and religious marker. In some Medieval literature, Saracens were equated with Muslims in general and described as dark-skinned, while Christians lighter skinned. *The Song of Roland*, an Old French 11th-century heroic poem, refers to the black skin of Saracens as their only exotic feature.

The term *Saracen* remained in widespread use in the West as a synonym for "Muslim" until the 18th century. When the Age of Discovery led to it becoming gradually obsolete and referred to Muslims as "Mohammedan".

First Crusade (1095–1099)

The Seljuk (pronounced "sahl-jook," refers to two branches of a dynastic Sunni Muslim Turkish confederation that ruled much of Central Asia and Anatolia in the 11th–14th centuries CE.

During the First Crusade, the fractured states of the Seljuks were generally more concerned with consolidating their own territories and gaining control of their neighbours than with cooperating against the crusaders. The Seljuks easily defeated the People's Crusade arriving in 1096, but they could not stop the progress of the army of the subsequent Princes' Crusade, which took important cities such as Nicaea, Iconium, Caesarea Mazaca and Antioch on its march to Jerusalem.

At the time of the First Crusade, the town of Arca became an important strategic point of control over the roads from Tripoli to Tartus and Homs. Raymond de Toulouse unsuccessfully besieged it for three months in 1099, which lasted until 13 May, when the Crusaders left having captured nothing.

In the meantime, the Fatimids had recaptured Jerusalem from the Seljuks. The Fatimid Iftikhar ad-Daula was governor of Jerusalem and aware of the Crusaders' intentions, attempted to make a deal with the Crusaders, promising freedom of passage to any pilgrims to the Holy Land on the condition that the Crusaders would not advance into their domains, but this was rejected. In 1099 the crusaders finally captured the Holy Land and set up the first Crusader states.

The Fatimids

The Fatimid Caliphate (Arabic: *الْخِلَافَةُ الْفَاتِمِيَّةُ*, romanized: *al-Khilāfa al-Fāṭimīya*) was an Ismaili Shia caliphate of the 10th to the 12th centuries CE. Spanning a large area of North Africa, it ranged from the Red Sea in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west. The Fatimids, a dynasty of Arab origin, trace their ancestry to the Prophet's daughter Fatima and her husband Alī ibn-Abī-Tālib, the first Shi'ite imam.

During the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Fatimid caliphate declined rapidly, and in 1171, Saladin invaded its territory. He founded the Ayyubid dynasty and incorporated the Fatimid state into the nominal sphere of authority of the Abbasid Caliphate.

