



JERUSALEM 1227, THE EXCOMMUNICATED PEACE

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Jerusalem, Holy City three times over. For fifteen centuries, the possession of the city had been incessantly fought over and caused bloody battles. It is hard to believe then, that in the thirteenth century History had been afforded a breathing space through the unlikely friendship between two visionary sovereigns - a sultan and a Christian emperor - who brought a miraculous period of grace to Jerusalem.

The Christian sovereign was Frederick II Hohenstaufen, Emperor of the Holy Roman-Germanic Empire and King of Sicily. The Muslim was Malik Al Kalmil, Sultan of Cairo and Guardian of the holy shrines. Between the two of them started a friendship which was unique in history . They admired each other without ever having met and - against the advice of their respective counsellors - they decided to put an end to 135 years of wars and crusades.
On February 11th, 1229, after five months of hard bargaining, the two sovereigns won the day... still without having met each other face to face. Frederick and Al-Kamil signed the treaty of Jaffa, an outstanding diplomatic achievement in the history of relations between Christianity and Islam. Even more so, this treaty was to be a model of its kind as it drew a line between religion and politics - which was totally opposed to the accepted vision of the era.
Upon his return to Sicily, Frederick had been publicly repudiated by Pope Gregory IX, who believed that this peace treaty with the Muslims was a pact with the Devil. He attempted to have Frederick assassinated and upheld the excommunication which he had pronounced against him.
Al Kamil died a lonely man in 1238. He knew that - after his death - Jerusalem would never again find peace. True enough, six years after his passing, his successors would take Jerusalem back from the Francs for good. Two further crusades by the Christians would not succeed in re-conquering the Holy Land. St. John fell at Acre on the 18th May 1291 - it would be the end of any Western presence in Palestine. Frederick, the excommunicated emperor, died in 1250, twelve years after his friend.
Each of them had been living a fragment of the longest dream

in History , the dream to reconcile East and West. Their dream was to last for only fifteen years.

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