As in almost every field of endeavour that the Frankish settlers were involved in, the design and construction of their houses was influenced by what they had known in their countries of origin, what they encountered on their passage East and what they found in the Levant. Consequently, to understand the nature of the houses they built we should first have an idea of the appearance of contemporary houses in the West, in the Byzantine Empire and in the Levant, the materials and methods employed in their construction, their overall design and the types of rooms, installations and furnishings they contained.

A: Contemporary Houses in the West

The Frankish settlers in the towns and villages of the Latin East came from many different regions in Europe. In Jerusalem the majority of the population probably came from France but there were settlers and pilgrims from Spain, Germany, Hungary and many other parts of Europe. In Acre many of the citizens were merchants, from the maritime cities of Italy—Genoa, Venice and Pisa—as well as from Provence and Spain; and parts of the city were occupied chiefly by settlers from England and Germany. On the basis of their family names we learn that even in the planned villages set up by the Franks in the rural

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1 In Jerusalem there was a street known as the Street of the Spaniards (Ruga Espania/Ispaniae) located in the north of the city leading from St Stephan’s Gate south along the Tyropaeon Valley, there was a German street (Rue des Alemans) and a German quarter in the area of the Church of St Mary of the Germans (now in the Jewish Quarter); there may also have been an area settled by Provencals in the Armenian Quarter near the Postern of Beaucayre.

2 The northern part of the burgus novus (Montmusard) is referred to on some of the contemporary maps of Acre as occupied by settlers from England (Co est le burgi est apelé Munt Musard; si est tut le plus inhabite de Engleis—B.L., Roy.14.C.VII, fol. 4v). This would have been around the headquarters of the Military Order of St Thomas à Becket. There was also a tower on the eastern defences known as the English Tower (Turris Anglorum).
areas of the kingdom there were settlers from a variety of countries.\(^3\) Having establishing themselves in the new towns and villages, these settlers built houses that were influenced at least to some extent by the architecture they knew in their places of origin.

In Europe, with its great cultural diversity, many different types of houses were constructed employing a number of different designs and materials and a variety of decorative elements. From region to region throughout the West, houses differed considerably, and this makes it difficult to draw up a set of criteria with which to make comparisons with the houses of the Latin East. Nevertheless, certain basic types of houses appear in the many regions from which the settlers came, and I shall deal here with those most relevant for comparison—houses on burgage plots, merchant houses, tower houses, hall houses and courtyard houses.

**Urban Houses**

Most of the houses found in towns fall into one of five categories: houses on narrow burgage plots, merchant palaces, tower houses, courtyard houses and hall houses.

a) **Houses on Burgage Plots**

The term “town house” in the West is often synonymous with the merchant house. Many of the houses in the heart of a town had shops facing the street and the street frontage was an important element of their design. It was the point of contact between the manufacturer/merchant and his clientele. The need of many urban dwellers to possess access to a street, not a mere lane or cul-de-sac as was often the case with houses in Near Eastern towns, resulted in the typical aspect of European urban dwellings. These were long and narrow, and often tall buildings, the façade sometimes attractively decorated with a shop opening onto the street and the living quarters behind, above, or both. The importance of the shop and its access is reflected in the regulations passed in some places to prevent the blocking of communal entry. In general the rights of access were carefully defined.\(^4\)

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\(^3\) At Bethgibelin for example there were settlers from Auvergne, Gascony, Lombardy, Poitou, Catalonia, Burgundy, Flanders and Carcassonne. See Prawer, 1972, pp. 83; Ellenblum, 1998, pp. 76–77.