



Nicholas Paul & Suzanne Yeager (eds), *Remembering the Crusades: Myth, Image and Identity*, The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore 2012. 284 p.

Remembering the Crusades: Myth, Image and Identity illustrates how the crusades were constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed in the collective memory of high and late medieval Europeans and the Latin inhabitants of the Crusader States. Rather than forming a broader framework for the phenomenon, the collection of articles approaches its subject from specialist angles.

Contents

Remembering the Crusades is divided into three parts, each containing three or four chapters. The editors have written a brief introduction as well as composed an index. In chapter one, Christine Chism considers the accounts of Ibn Jubayr (1145–1217) and Ibn Battuta (1304–c. 1377) from crusader and post-crusader Levant. Among Christians, those who treated Muslims well puzzled Ibn Jubayr, whose itinerary Chism calls ‘a grand narrative of Muslim-Christian enmity’. Although Battuta wrote in a very different and perhaps more relaxed context, he too seemed to suggest that close inter-cultural relations might have a detrimental influence to personal belief.

Chaviva Levin analyses the accounts of the Mainz Anonymous, Solomon bar Samson, Eliezer bar Nathan (1090–1170) and Ephraim of Bonn (1132–1200) of the persecutions of the Jewish Ashkenazic communities during the First and Second Crusades. These chronicles have been thoroughly studied by other scholars, but Levin is nevertheless able to draw interesting conclusions concerning the changing attitudes towards suicide and forcible conversion. Whereas personal sacrifice remained a model, later writings emphasized pragmatic strategies for survival, and the primacy of the continuity of the Jewish community even if at the cost of religious purity. In chapter three by Jay Rubenstein concerns the apocalyptic interpretation of the First Crusade in Lambert of Saint-Omer’s *Liber floridus* (ca. 1120). Rubenstein concludes that apocalyptic hopes were an important definer of crusader worldview, and that the theme has remained understudied and belittled in modern study.

The second part begins with two articles concerning art history. Jerrilynn Dodds discusses banded arches as iconographic links between the Middle East, Crusader Europe and Iberia, whereas Jaroslav Folda studies how the First Crusade was presented in the miniatures of the earliest illustrated continuations of William of Tyre's (ca. 1130–1186) *Chronicon/History of Outremer* 1244–1291. This is an excellent article by an experienced researcher, showing that a very specialized and narrow theme can open a complete new world to the reader, if the context is opened and analyzed carefully. Folda is not only interested in the content of the illustrations, but also in asking why they emerged exactly at that point of time, what was special about their place of origin, what did they mean to their contemporary readers, and finally what was their role in the commemoration of the First Crusade in medieval Europe through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Next follow two literary-historical surveys. Suzanne Conklin Akbari compares two Middle English poems, both titled *The Siege of Jerusalem*. The first text describes the fall of the city to crusaders in 1099, the second the invasion of Titus and Vespasian in 70 C.E. The key terms 'siege literature' and 'siege poetry' could have been defined more clearly. As it is highly probable that the reader of an interdisciplinary collection is not a specialist of all academic fields covered, it is important to open the basic terminology unambiguously.

David Morris analyzes feminine imagery of Jerusalem in biblical and crusade-related depictions, showing very interesting links between the sources. In the long-standing and rich Middle Eastern tradition of identifying cities as female deities, the Bible, too, includes the notion of the Holy City as the wife of Yahweh, sometimes enslaved and defiled, sometimes triumphant and prospering. Among these metaphorical expressions, Urban II (papacy 1088–1099), Guibert of Nogent (ca. 1055–1124), Ralph of Caen (bef. 1079–after 1130), Baudry of Dol, Fulcher of Chartres (ca. 1059–after 1127) and Gilo of Paris (d. ca. 1139–1142) prefer the interpretation of Jerusalem as the mother of cities, first suffering as a slave woman under Saracen yoke and then uplifted to rightful splendor, whereas the anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum* omits any feminine allegories of the city.

In chapter eight, Mohamed El-Moctar compares medieval and present Sunni and Shi'a perceptions of Saladin (ca. 1138–1193). Being the only chapter concerning both medieval and our contemporary historiography, the text makes a valuable addition to the collection. El-Moctar proves that the current clash of opinions between the Sunni (perceiving Saladin as a liberating hero) and Shi'a (accusing Saladin of persecution and ideological treason) was far less clear-cut in the aftermath of Saladin's career. In medieval historiography, Saladin seems to have had enemies and admirers over the sectarian borders.¹

David Perry's exploration to the Venetian memories of the Fourth Crusade as justifications of holy theft, *furta sacra*, is one of the pearls of this collection. The exemplary case of the translation of the relics of Paul the Martyr from

¹ For example Ibn al-Athīr (1160–1234), a committed Sunni, accused Saladin of reluctance to eradicate the Frankish states and plotting with Fatimid heretics, whereas Shi'a Ibn Abī-Tay (c. 1179–1232) admired Saladin.

Constantinople to Venice does not lack drama and excitement, yet remains solidly based on historical source material and follows a clear and balanced structure. The point of the text was to show that just as Rome rose under Christianity, Venice would rise in the similar manner to the head of Christendom after subjugating with its allies three eighths of the once Roman Empire of Constantine.

The last two chapters concern the crusades in the collective memory of the military orders. Jonathan Riley-Smith discusses the impact of internal disputes and times of crisis to the formation of the Hospitaller and Templar interpretation of the First Crusade and the founding of the Order of the Temple. Riley-Smith discusses an alternative foundation story of the Order, and forms a theory of the story later used by the Hospitallers in order to justify the claim for Templar lands. Laura Whatley explores the Hospitaller Seals in England from twelfth to sixteenth centuries with special emphasis on the seals from 1148 to the 1180s. Whatley shows that there occurred slight changes and modifications in pictorial symbols, some inclusion of heraldry and personal insignia, as well as regional variation between English, French and Middle Eastern seals, which might have indicated the growing authority of provincial houses.

Strengths and weaknesses

Crusade studies have risen into relative popularity within the last two decades. This is of course a gratifying improvement, which has been accompanied by a continuously rising number of publications on the field. In addition to the yearbook of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East, *Crusades*, a substantial number of article collections have been published in recent years. Many of these collections have origins similar to this one at hand; an individual conference or symposium.

Even if many of the articles are interesting and of excellent scientific quality,² *Remembering the Crusades* remains unfocused: there is not always any real connection between the studies. This comes out already in the introduction, the scope of the book is defined rather vaguely, and the topics of the three parts of the collection do not tell much about their contents.

The chapters could have been harmonized much further. Few conference papers left as such would form a meaningful entity, and to fulfill such an aim, they should develop a point in common. Furthermore, they should have shared standards of structure and style, including an introduction to basic backgrounds, sources and their contexts of writing, discussion, as well as clearly expressed conclusions. A conference paper cannot usually afford all this because of time limits, and thus focuses on the most interesting details and findings, but this setting should have altered by the time of publication. Coherence between articles requires rewriting, and time to read, comment and interpolate other authors' texts, as well as coordination and detailed writing instructions from the editors; it

² The standard of individual research is uneven. The chapters differ in their use and understanding of primary sources. Mostly this is not a problem, but some of the articles have been written on the basis of existing literature with few references to original sources. In some cases, the reference after a direct quotation is missing; transliteration standards vary from article to article.

is a time-consuming process.

This is a book for a specialist. Several of the articles include insightful interpretations and fresh new ideas, and some of them – those explaining the background, basic paradigms and contextual processes leading into conclusions drawn – could be used for university teaching. Whereas someone well informed in the present paradigms of crusade studies will mostly enjoy the book, a less involved reader might end up grasping a list of details, not a deepened, wider view of the remembrance of the crusades.

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