FOREWORD

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This volume constitutes a fresh and significant contribution to the historiography of the crusades and the Muslim Near East. Ahmed Sheir and his colleagues, greatly assisted by Amar S. Baadj's enviably fluent translations, have produced an impressive, broad-ranging and diverse series of papers that will do much to put down a marker for the sheer volume and diversity of work on the crusades in Arabic scholarship. For most of the twentieth century and even until recent years, scholars of the crusades and the Muslim world tended to keep at arms-length from one another, in part by reason of geography, in part because of different historiographical traditions, in part through politics, and overarching all of this, I suspect, the issue of language. In 1999 Carole Hillenbrand's landmark book *Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* did much to introduce western scholars and students to the medieval Muslim world.[1] This, combined with a far greater public curiosity about the history and legacy of the crusades after the use of crusade imagery in and after the 9/11 terror attacks, prompted a considerable volume of work. From a western academic perspective one consequence was the up-to-date translation from Arabic of important narrative texts such as Ibn al-Athir, Usama ibn Munqidh and Ibn Shaddad, and then, just as importantly, non-narratives, such as poetry, sermons, pilgrimage documents or compendia including Ibn abi Usaybiʿah's huge work *The Best Accounts of the Classes of Physicians*.[2] There is also, much more recently, a far greater interaction

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[1] Carole Hillenbrand, *Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

[2] Ibn al-Athir, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh*, trans. Donald S. Richards, 3 volumes, Crusade Texts in Translation, 13, 15, 17 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006-8); Usama ibn Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation: Islam and the Crusades*, trans. Paul M. Cobb (London: Penguin, 2008); Baha al-Din Ibn Shaddad,

between historians of the crusades and the Muslim Near East. This is happening at academic conferences, such as the Leeds International Medieval Congress and the Society for the Medieval Mediterranean. Likewise at the most recent quadrennial conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East held at Royal Holloway, University of London in 2022, or the 'Hillenbrand 25 Years on' workshop held at Groningen in October 2024. All of these events have featured participants from a range of academic backgrounds, although the majority of the Arabic-language scholars are based in western educational institutions.

While such developments are hugely welcome and exciting for all concerned, there is still a long way to go. The greater use of hybrid technology allowing people remote access to talks and events is a huge boon; the series organized by Ahmed Sheir from which some of these papers derive being an obvious example. But although it is relatively easy to find overviews of western historiography on the crusades, this is not the case for the Arab world.[3] We have a need, therefore, to recognize, understand and learn from the approaches and interpretations these scholars have chosen to take and also to see the traditions in which they have developed.

While in recent years scholars from and/or based in the Eastern Mediterranean have been publishing important research in European languages, notably Taef el-Azhari, Abbès Zouache and Ahmed Sheir, the Arabic language work of many of their colleagues remains inaccessible for the

The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin or al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya wa'l-Mahasin al-Yusufiyya by Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad, trans. Donald S. Richards, Crusade Texts in Translation 7 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); *Muslim Sources of the Crusader Period: An Anthology*, ed. and trans. James E. Lindsay and Suleiman A. Mourad (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2021); *Gouvernance et Libéralitiés de Saladin d'après les données inédites de six documents arabes*, ed. and trans. Jean-Michel Mouton, Dominique Sourdel and Janine Thomine-Sourdel (Paris: L'académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 2015); Ibn abi Usaybi'ah, trans. Emilie Savage-Smith, Geert Jan van Gelder, Franak Hilloowala *et al*., *A Literary History of Medicine: ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ of Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah (d. 1270)*, edited, translated and analyzed by The ALHOM Team (Leiden: Brill, 2019); abridged as *Anecdotes and Antidotes: A Medieval Arabic History of Physicians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[3] See Christopher J. Tyerman, *The Debate on the Crusades* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Norman J. Housley, *Contesting the Crusades* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) and the forthcoming chapter by Christoph Maier in volume 1 of *The Cambridge History of the Crusades*, ed. Jonathan Phillips *et al*., 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2026).

majority of western academics.[4] Several of the essays here will help redress that; of course, language may keep much hidden, but having a sense of the sheer range and variety of work will offer an insight into the study of the crusades in a particular time and/or place as the papers here by Sheir, Awad and Mounir show. In many ways, the barrier of language exists in reverse too – an absence of good translations into Arabic of Latin or Old French texts, and likewise, the poor availability of up-to-date secondary scholarship, for example, avoiding the problematic interpretation of Steven Runciman, work that reviewers described as out of date even on its initial publication in 1952.[5] Such a situation can, therefore, mirror the limitations of crusade scholars who cannot read Arabic, but this volume will, at the bare minimum, show English language historians what they need to look for, or to be aware of. That in itself can stimulate either a wish to pursue a line of enquiry following, say, the chapter by Raheel here, or to signpost a particular source or even to look to make a personal contact.

These papers also shed valuable light on the variety of perspectives that scholars in the Islamic world have chosen to adopt. One such case is in the chapter by Baadj looking at the Marxist-based interpretations of Mahmud Ismaʿil, and then showing how he, in turn influenced further generations of scholars (and presumably, public perceptions) of the crusades. Within this collection, we also get a clear sense of the variety of religious, political and cultural contexts in which scholars in the Arabic language operate. We have here also a vital glimpse of the regional and chronological variations encompassed by these issues which will help to break down the perception of crusade scholarship in the Muslim Near East as monolithic.

Also of great interest here are the diverse forms of evidence in play. To bring in non-narrative sources such as folk epics (Sokolov) and film (Ragheb, noting the vital political context too) can help us to appreciate better the breadth of scholarship here, but also to get a far better insight into the impact

[4] For example: Taef el-Azhari, *Queens, Eunuchs and Concubines in Islamic History, 661-1257* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019); multiple fine articles by Abbès Zouache including: 'Écrire l'histoire des croisades aujourd'hui, en Orient et en Occident', in: *Construire la mèditerranée, penser les transferts culturels*, eds Rania Abdellatif, Yassir Benhima, Daniel König and Elisabeth Ruchaud (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2013), pp. 120-47; Ahmed M. Sheir, *The Prester John Legend between East and West during the Crusades: Entangled Eastern-Latin Mythical Legacies* (Budapest: Trivent Publishing, 2022).

[5] See the summary by Jonathan S. C. Riley-Smith in *Crusades* 6 (2007), pp. 216-17.

and the reception of the crusades in both the medieval and the modern worlds.

Part of the excitement and enjoyment of what we all do is, of course, to see new perspectives, ideas and information. Too long underappreciated and often unknown in terms of scope and volume, it is hoped that the scholarship manifest in these essays does much to bring a wealth of learning to a new and wider audience.