

Review of: Allen, S. J. and Emilie Amt. *The Crusades: A Reader*. 2nd ed. (North York, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

In *The Crusades: A Reader*, S. J. Allen and Emilie Amt have brought together primary sources that argue the crusades resonate today as they did during the Medieval world of Eurasia. The words of these participants give gravitas and reflect the changes that these continental events had on the people, their religions, and their cultures. Allen and Amt extended their latest edition to connect the crusading thesis to the modern world. The cross-millennial connections are shown within documents or speeches that range from the White House right after 9/11, Osama bin Laden's direct response to those words, and the use of crusading legends, i.e., Saladin. (Allen & Amt, 416-419) These primary sources reflect how religious struggles persist as cornerstones of national/political identity, military, economic, and cultural aspects of everyday life. Religious struggles are an extremely relevant topic brought into focus with medieval primary documentation to today, and are a major strength.

Relying upon primary documents pertaining to the crusades does have its drawbacks. Voices during the crusading period that would add context to today's average person are somewhat missing, i.e., the upper-class sources used for the Children's Crusade. (Allen & Amt, 241-244) The lack of diverse social sources is not the editor's fault, but is based upon a myriad of cultural factors, such as the lower literacy rates for the average person. Personal biases from medieval sources can be strong at times. A prime example is, once again, the Children's Crusade, in which an author from Marbach, Germany, admonishes the children and the lower classes for taking up the Christian cause, even though all of European Christendom was caught up in religious fervor. (Allen & Amt, 243) The Allen and Amt's presentation of opposing as well

as less hyperbolic viewpoints, such as the other three sources from the Children's Crusade section, creates a balance to the primary sources presented.

The balance with sources tends to focus on the Western Asiatic crusades. As a consequence, the crusades for the Iberian Peninsula and Eastern Europe could receive greater attention. The Eastern European crusades, especially because of the conflicts between modern Russia and the other European powers, where religion (extensively used by Putin in Russia) is a tool to galvanize identities for war. Additionally, the book only gives a cursory background for each document and section, which requires the reader to have previous background knowledge of each source. The helpful intermediate medieval historical knowledge can create slight confusion for novices, but in the end, Allen and Amt show the complex connections that the crusades have given to the world.

The global connections the editors utilize is built upon chronological and empirical methodologies to separate primary documents. These documents show the crusades' evolution from its religious foundation into a rationale for colonization which continued to develop into the modern geopolitical framework for conflicts between the same Abrahamic religions. Initially, Christian church leaders presented crusading as a means to protect and ensure access to the holy sites within the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea (Antioch, Jerusalem, etc.). The early crusading primary sources state a political need to respond to Islam's expansion into the Iberian Peninsula. (Allen & Amt, 17) The Allen and Amt make a concise argument that the crusades began for religious, political, as well as military reasons because of the First Crusades' success. In response, Muslim religious scholars expanded jihad to galvanize and create a cohesive response to the Christian threat. (Allen & Amt, 72-78) The Islamic response to the First Crusade

resulted in the failings and compromises of the successive campaigns and a questioning of crusading methods.

The argument that the Catholic world began to view the leadership of these endeavors in a cynical light resonates with sources beginning with the Fourth Crusade. Pope Innocent III needed to reorganize the Catholic Church and create new financial instruments to support such long-distance endeavors. (Allen & Amt, 216) The Fourth Crusade began to expose these leaders to the economic boom that resulted from crusading actions. (Allen & Amt, 220) The economic boom led to Italian trading city-states, like Venice and Genoa, expanding into other parts of the Mediterranean world. The crusading economic realization, by extension, led to monarchs taking on the pope's political role within European Christendom. (Allen & Amt, 328) These political leaders used the crusades to shore up domestic political claims to expand their spheres of political influence and increase religious prestige, i.e., El Cid's campaigns in the 11th century. (Allen & Amt, 288) These rationalized expansions continued into the modern age, using sources from David Hume, Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad Asad, and post 9/11 rhetoric used by both Christian and Muslim political leaders. The argument's connection is compelling and shows that crusading is alive within the modern world. The use of these primary sources gives a solid argument to the increasing scope of the crusades. The crusades' economic and political growth also spurred the development of culture.

The editors dive into the crusades' impact on European cultural life as well. The arts, like *The Song of Roland*, began to reinforce and romanticize these needs to take back "Christian" lands from Muslim armies. Allen and Amt show, "The poem has little value as an account of the eighth-century wars, but as a window on the Christian military culture, knightly ideals, and European views of Muslims on the eve of the Crusades ..." (Allen & Amt, 22) The arts were

used to sustain the common people and lower nobility to continue the fight for their religious identities. (Allen & Amt, 209-213) The authors connect the argument well with the modern era through the use of political cartoons during World War I. (Allen & Amt, 405-406)

In the end, the editors' arguments about the crusades' historical, multifaceted, global impact are sound and well supported. The small drawbacks are that the collection requires at least an intermediate level of knowledge for the crusading period and a limited voice for lower social class sources. There is no inherent bias in the presentation of primary sources throughout the work, and the documentation reinforces the main arguments. I highly recommend the book as a reader for initial research into primary sources relating to historical or modern crusading topics.

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