Reviews

New Directions in the Study of Islam and the Crusades

Review essay of Michael Frassetto and David R. Blanks eds. *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other,* (New York, St. Martin=s Press, 1999) 233pp. Index; Robert I. Burns SJ and Paul E. Chevedden with the participation of Mikel de Epalza, *Negotiating Cultures: Bilingual Surrender Treaties in Muslim-Crusader Spain,* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1999)xviii+279pp. Bibliography, index; Reuven Firestone, *Jihad. The Origin of Holy War in Islam,* (New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999) vii+195pp. Bibliography, index; Alan V. Murray, *The Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Dynastic History 1099-1125, (Oxford,* Linacre College, 2000) 280pp. Bibliography, index; Anne-Marie Eddé, *La principauté Ayyoubide d=Alep (579/1183-658/1260),* (Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999). Freiburger Islamstudien, Band 21. 727pp. Appendices, maps, bibliography, index;

Since its appearance Edward Said's book, *Orientalism,* with its disdain toward the professionals engaged in its study, has dominated the discussion of Islam and the West. The European interest in its past cultural perceptions of Islam and Muslims has been since recognized by the European associations of Islamists and Arabists, who have resorted to inviting political leaders from the Middle East to address their meetings, but so far it remains unequaled and unreciprocated. Yet, the need for an intellectual dialogue between Islamic societies and the West has never been more urgent Only now has a less flamboyant and more balanced approach to the study of Western views of Islam and Muslims prevailed, one which rightfully incorporates the scholarly study of Islam and Islamic societies in Europe since about WWI. Studies have appeared that highlighted the fact that the European perception of the Muslim was a changing and mutating concept, which varied at different periods in time according to the proximity to and involvement of the various nations and groups with Muslims. In other words, an evolutionary curve of the historical *modus vivendi* can be drawn from the early medieval perception of the 8th century invading Arabs, to their co-existence in Muslim Spain and then to the Ottoman Turks who were masters and co-citizens of Europe and Europeans.

The fundamental thesis of the book *Western Views of Islam,* a collection of papers dealing with this evolutionary curve, is the centrality of the question to the European psyche. The image of the Muslim extracted from the literary texts demonstrates how it changed, gaining different components with the passage of time, events and changing context. But as the individual cases studied by the authors show, no single methodology should be used, instead, both cultural and historical methodologies should be given equal credit. The papers highlight a variety of components. By the 11th century the hostile image of the Muslim, as reflected in the writings of a preaching monk, was that of a heretic, an image enhanced by comparison to the Pagan Romans as persecutors of Christians. That image remained dominant during the Crusades, a defining moment in the historical relationship, inaugurating the aggressive streak in the European-

Muslim relationship throughout the Mediterranean region even though the terms Islam and Muslim had not yet appeared. At a later stage, even while the image of the pagan and the heretic still dominated, the religious image also incorporated Greek, Aristotelian, concepts such as triunity, which was passed through Averroës into Christian theology and surfaced in the Biblical exegesis. Another component, highlighted by the literary texts of late medieval Italy, while a continuation of the *Chansons de geste*, was the image of the Saracen as a warrior, an earlier image resulting from the wars with the Carolingians. The changing Muslim image retrieved symbols from the late classical period, comparing the Saracen to the Goths, Vandals and Lombards. The infusion of Roman elements into the old French portrayal of the Saracen are solidly in place here; The original Saracen was a pagan, idol worshiper and devil's disciple, with physical deformities, horns, magic, sorcery, but he was also depicted as bold, daring, genteel. The humanistic texts from 15th century Italy reflect the early European sense of intellectual power and authority over Muslim societies. Eventually, the warlike Saracen replaced the religiously dominated image of the heretic. New literature and a new image emerged with the appearance of the Turk but even though the image of the Ottomans included different components the negative overtones remained constant.

Nowhere was the history behind the image better documented than in the Iberian Peninsula, where Christians and Muslims locked horns for several centuries while engaging in a very different kind of *conviviencia* than occurred in the rest of Mediterranean Europe. The changing balance of power in the Iberian peninsula was a prolonged, drawn-out process, affecting the culture of both communities. While the medieval church referred to it as a "Crusade", and it did involve some similar historical questions such as settlement and colonization, it was, on the whole, very different from the Crusades to the Holy Land. Burns/Chevedden and Epalza's book is a collective effort to reconstruct the process of Spanish occupation of the densely settled Eastern Iberia by attaching it to two bi-lingual treaties signed between Muslim cities' governors and the Aragonese king in the 13th century. The list of privileges provided to the Muslims reflect a desire to allow for continuous economic, social and even religious survival. What is impressive is the kindly, friendly almost comradely tone in which the Muslim commanders were addressed by the Christian kings in these documents. Intolerance, forced conversions and property expropriation all came later. The modern Spanish historiography, quoted here by Epalza, has looked for historical parallels between the medieval treaties and those contracted between the Spanish government and Arab countries in the 18th century in a desire to create a normal and universal pattern of relationships with the Muslims.

Western interest in the Islamic concept of the Holy War, *Jihād*, is usually linked to its revival at the time of the Crusades, but recently, for obvious reasons, has become the center of attention. Firestone's book on the subject preceded the 9/11 attacks but his research makes it perfectly clear that the evolution of the concept of *Jihād* within the Islamic theological body of literature should rather be linked to internal historical conditions, political, religious and social stimuli, traceable to an early period, from pre-Islamic Arabia through the rise of Islam. According to him, the crucial moment in the formation of the new concept of war occurred because at a certain point there was a shift from pre-

Islamic social conduct of the tribe to that of the early Muslim community, or from `material war= to a `religious war= and that it resulted from this particular antagonism and the rise of individualism. The decisive moment of the shift from non-belligerent to belligerent behaviour was related to the formation of the community in Medina, and the change in the sense of kinship from tribal to *umma* which made it possible. It was a shift to a political *umma* endowed with an ideological motivation. The attacks by the new Muslims on their Meccan kin, unimaginable during pre-Islamic times, were now possible. They called on God to justify it precisely because it was a major departure. The result was that the Muslims began to see all their future wars in ideological terms and all wars as wars against God. The transition which accompanied it from fractious and fractioned clan to a unified community under God provided all that was needed in terms of the shift from a material war to a Holy War. This interpretation reduces the evolution in the Islamic concept of Holy War to a strictly internal development based on short term and immediate needs without allowing for the long term interpretation of influences from an outside historical ideology, historical events, or political force.

New insights into the relationship between Muslims and Christians among others are also provided by two new and very different books on the Crusades to the Holy Land by two historians, both of whom have chosen to write in the format of dynastic history. Alan Murray's approach to dynastic history is to use prosopograpica, the micro-history methodology par excellence. Focusing on the short period of the reign of the first three rulers of the Kingdom of Jerusalem of the Bouillon-Boulogne family, Godfrey, Baldwin I and Baldwin II, 1099-1125, he has set out to reconstruct their immediate milieu, their own family and entourage, clients vassals and friends both in Europe and the Middle East. By casting a wider net over the individuals surrounding the monarch and expanding the view to include Godfrey's family affairs as dukes of Lotharingia, Murray has provided the context for Godfrey's election and the governance patterns adopted in Jerusalem. For instance, by reconstructing the sale of his ancestral holdings before his departure, Murray has provided a plausible scenario for why Godfrey was determined to stay in the Holy Land. The fact that Baldwin I was already recognized as his brother's heir in Europe explains why the first succession on his death in 1100 was so peaceful. While Murray has not made much use of the continuity factor in the institutional structures between Europe and the kingdom of Jerusalem, he has identified the actors in each of the events and explored the individuals' family, vassalage and other relationships which explain why they were chosen to fulfill the role they did. The identity of individuals who accompanied Godfrey on the Crusade and staffed the new institutions, carefully reconstructed from a variety of documents, resulted in a detailed history of the first generation. Enhanced by appendices which trace the individual histories of each of them, this is a very intimate history, an insider story of the historical narrative.

Anne-Marie Eddé's dynastic history of the Ayyubid Aleppo principality between1183 to 1260, is a very different history. An important center ruled by Saladin's heirs, and the neighbour of Crusader Antioch, the history of Aleppo during a period not much longer chronologically than that of Murray's, is a comprehensive study which includes the political, social, economic, religious and literary life of the city and its dependencies. Written in the large format of

the French Thèse d'État it is a testimony both to the perseverance required of French historians, and to the wealth of the Islamic sources which have allowed an elaboration on this scale. While the relationship with Frankish outposts south and West of Aleppo are not the focus of the book, its political chapters reconstruct the division which followed Saladin's death and the infighting among his sons and brothers. That, and the Mongol invasion of the Middle East, explain the survival of the Crusaders' cities for another 100 years. Moreover, the elaboration of the institutional structures of the Ayyubid state offers interesting comparative possibilities. In spite of the general perception that Islam did not have "feudalism", at least not in the European sense, the land grants, *iqtā*, made by the Ayyubids to family members, military commanders and tribal chiefs affected the sultan's attempts to concentrate power in his hands in a very similar way to that in which the Frankish nobility conducted relations with their own monarchy. The constant lack of manpower, the occurrence of female regency, the military tactics and siege warfare, were all shared concerns of both the Latin cities and Aleppo's masters at different times. Moreover, Frankish Antioch's collaboration with the Mongols and the Armenians against Aleppo, reflect the degree of the Latins' integration in the region and their familiarity and share in the political game. The chapters dealing with the economy reinforce this sense of peaceful Western integration by documenting the penetration of the Venetians into the regional trading network through numerous treaties now commonly signed with other Muslim rulers in the region. The chapters on the cultural and religious life demonstrate the sophistication of municipal and learning institutions that dotted the Alepine urban scenery and that neither Frankish society nor the Mongols, Kurds, Turks and others gathering at the gates could have either enjoyed or appreciated at the time. In the larger frame of the Islamic perspective of the history of the Crusades, this new synthesis manifests, how unique was the momentary unification that resulted in Saladin's triumph at Hattin. It was not the unity achieved by Saladin, but the political patterns described in the bickering of his heirs, which was the norm. These were the intrinsic patterns of the region during the roughly five centuries that separated the Abbasid empire from that of the Ottomans, and during which the Crusades took place. The image conjured here is of a society of cultural strength and political fragility.

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Nuessel, Frank & Cedeño, Aristófanes (Ed.). *Selected Literary Commentary in the Literature of Spain*.Ottawa: Legas, 2004.

Selected Literary Commentary in the Literature of Spain presents a collection of literary commentary from major literary works of the Spanish Peninsular canon. According to the authors, their intention has been to provide a representative sample of the historical development of literary theory and literary commentary in peninsular literature.

It comprises ten chapters with literary commentary found in the works of major writers. There are seven chapters on the Golden Age period including