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Emilie Amt, S. J. Allen, eds. *The Crusades: A Reader, Second Edition.*

Matt King

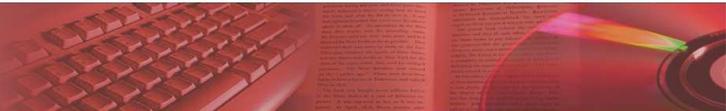
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Emilie Amt, S. J. Allen, eds. *The Crusades: A Reader, Second Edition*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014. 464 pp. \$49.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-4426-0623-4.



Reviewed by Matthew King (University of Minnesota)

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air War College)

The University of Toronto Press continues its publication of incredibly useful sourcebooks for undergraduate classrooms with its release of the second edition of Allen and Amt's *The Crusades: A Reader*. An expanded collection of sources from the 2003 edition published by Broadview Press, this welcome update reflects the broadening interest of scholars in the geographic, temporal, and thematic scope of crusading. The authors hope that this compilation of sources does not reflect any "political or moral stance," but rather a group of compelling documents that will "facilitate a broad range of discussion and debate on crusading topics" (p. xii). Included are more than one hundred sources from the fourth through the twenty-first century that address the origins, practice, and consequences of the Crusades.

The book is divided into ten sections, each containing around a dozen sources. Sources are introduced in a brief paragraph that provides useful contextual information and are concluded with a series of discussion questions aimed at an undergraduate audience. Allen and Amt begin their sourcebook with documents pertaining to the origins of sacred violence in the Christian and Islamic traditions. Subsequent sections consider the course of the traditionally defined Crusades to the Holy Land (sections

2, 4), the society of the Crusader states and Europe during the time of the Crusades (3, 5), and the broadening scope of crusading during the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries (6-9). The book's final section traces perceptions of crusading from the Enlightenment through the present day in a useful selection of texts and images.

The authors have added a number of sources since the first edition of this reader, most prominently from the Arabic-language tradition. The inclusion of a passage from al-Sulami's *The Book of the Jihad* (1105) and expanded selections from the writings of Ibn al-Athir and Bahā' ad-Dīn nicely juxtapose other Latin-language sources found in the book and conform with currently scholarly trends of considering the perspectives of both Christian and Islamic actors of the Crusades. In addition, Allen and Amt's inclusion of sources dealing with the homecoming of crusaders from their journeys helps to showcase their simultaneously spiritual and material concerns.

Perhaps the most welcome addition to the second edition of this sourcebook is the tenth section of the book, which considers popular perspectives on the Crusades from the Enlightenment to the twenty-first cen-

ture. Few topics in the Middle Ages provoke controversy in the modern world quite like the Crusades—seen most recently in the varied reactions to Barack Obama’s remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast in February 2015—and the authors of this book have provided a convenient compilation of sources that traces how modern perspectives on the Crusades have been formed. This section begins with the writings of Enlightenment thinkers David Hume and Edward Gibbon, whose assessment of the medieval Crusades is overwhelmingly negative. Allen and Amt then transition to European imperialist/nationalist narratives of crusading by Jean François Michaud and William Hillary, followed by the reactionary writings of Sayyid Qutb and Muhammad Asad. The authors conclude with a series of pictures showing modern depictions of Saladin—Saddam Hussein’s adoption of the Kurd Saladin as a nationalist hero is a particularly ironic and effective teaching tool—and a thoughtful reflection from Umej Bhatia’s 2008 book *Forgetting Osama bin Munqidh, Remembering Osama bin Laden: The Crusades in Modern Muslim Memory*. Section 10’s sources thus provide for undergraduate students a timely and necessary overview for how to best understand the evolution of popular discourse about crusading in the modern world.

Allen and Amt’s *The Crusades: A Reader* is a powerful teaching tool and one that provides a multiplicity of perspectives on crusading and sacred violence. However, it is not without some small flaws. The bibliography provided at the end of the book only contains the

documents from which specific primary sources came, many of which are from the early mid-twentieth century. A short, updated bibliography at the end of each of the book’s ten sections could provide further directions for students interested in a particular aspect of crusading.

In addition, because Allen and Amt provide such a chronologically and geographically broad view of sources pertaining to the Crusades, certain regions are given more attention than others. Depending on the focus of instruction, instructors of undergraduate courses will likely need to provide supplementary documents for discussions of crusading in al-Andalus, Sicily, and North Africa, as these regions are given less attention than other regions of crusading activity. Furthermore, there is considerable lack of attention given to the Crusader states during the thirteenth century. Sources pertaining to the mechanisms of survival and the politics of the Crusader states during the thirteenth century, such as letters exchanged between Baybars and King Hugh of Cyprus, would be a welcome addition to this expansive collection.

However, Allen and Amt are cognizant of the “difficult decisions” that had to be made with regard to omitting certain documents when compiling this collection (p. xiv). Indeed, the above criticisms are minor and should not detract from the overall quality of this sourcebook. *The Crusades: A Reader* is an incredible teaching tool and one that has its place in any undergraduate course expressly devoted to or tangentially related to the Crusades.

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