Islamic perspectives on the Crusades: Past and present

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ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE CRUSADES:
PAST AND PRESENT

By

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B.A. University of New Hampshire (2009)

THESIS

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This thesis has been examined and approved.

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12 May 2011
To Caroline, forever my 'Ma'
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Finally, I would like to especially give my heartfelt thanks to Professor Jonathan Couser. Though Professor Couser is not a current member of the graduate faculty at the University of New Hampshire, and technically could not be named on my thesis committee, he took the lead role in the development, accountability, and final form of my study. Professor Couser is an asset to the University of New Hampshire, and I hope someday he is recognized for his research, teaching techniques, and the devotion he shows to his students as a mentor and is granted graduate faculty status.
FOREWORD

This master’s thesis was researched and written during the fall of 2010, and completed in the spring of 2011. I earned my B.A. in History in the spring of 2009 from the University of New Hampshire. As an undergraduate, I concentrated on American and European studies. Though the University of New Hampshire currently does not maintain a degree-seeking program in World History, I have had multiple courses on the Crusades and Islam. As a graduate liberal studies student at the University of New Hampshire, I have focused my curriculum towards courses in world history and religion, specifically Christianity and Islam.

The intent of this study is to introduce to the general reader some of the accounts of the Crusades submitted by Arab chroniclers, such as the works of Ibn al-Qalanisi and Usama Ibn Munqidh. These two Islamic chroniclers were present when the Franj (Crusaders) entered the lands of the Levant. I shall use English-language translations of these Islamic accounts as evidence, along with other Arab chroniclers.

In undertaking this endeavor I hope to shed light on non-Eurocentric viewpoints on the Crusades. My goal is that those living in the western world realize that though our cultures are different from those in the Near East, we are all human beings, and that although those living in the Occident (westerners) and Middle East adhere to different religions, Islam is nothing to fear.
ABSTRACT

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE CRUSADES
PAST AND PRESENT

By

Robert Noel Duprez, Jr

University of New Hampshire, May, 2011

It is important that scholars use a variety of researching methods when analyzing the effect of the Crusades, how they affected Islamic perspectives of the West during the period 1095-1291, and their imprint on today’s world. Western scholars with a Euro-centric point of view have accomplished the overwhelming amount of research on the Crusades. It is not until the last decade that Islamic scholars have taken an interest in the Crusades, and their affect on the Muslim world.

This study came to the following conclusions: 1) Scholarship on the Crusades has mainly represented a Euro-centric viewpoint, 2) Contemporary Muslim scholarship is Arab centered, and marginalizes Turks, Persians, and Kurds, 3) There is not enough research on Islamic sources and perspectives, 4) Many Islamic scholars have an anti-western bias due to anti-colonialism, and occupation. Credibility is founded only when historians research all the sources and perspectives on a topic, and realize their limitations.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEDICATION</th>
<th>iv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOREWORD</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER PAGE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## INTRODUCTION

I Modern Scholars’ Evaluations of Muslim Narrative Sources

- Modern Scholars’ Perspectives and Interpretations of Islamic Sources 5
- Trends of Contemporary Scholars and Approach to Study 30

II Arab Chroniclers of the Crusades Eyewitness Accounts

- Perspectives of Arab Chroniclers Frankish Invasions of the Levant 33
- The Caliphate and Christendom 35
- Arab Chroniclers of the Crusades 38

III Ramifications of the Crusades Then and Now

- The Crusades Modern Muslim/Non-Muslim Relations 60
- Who Were the Victors in the Crusades? 65

CONCLUSION 67

BIBLIOGRAPHY 70
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of the Crusades, how they affected Islamic perspectives of the West during the period 1095-1291, and their imprint on today’s world. Also, this study was motivated by the belief that historians researching the Crusades have an obligation to comprehend Islamic perspectives in order to attain a more unbiased view of the culture of Islam.

Many people living in the West are ignorant that the Crusades contributed to the shaping of daily Islamic perspectives on the Occident (both past and present). Historians researching the Crusades have an obligation to comprehend Islamic perspectives on them in order to attain a more unbiased view of the culture of Islam. This will help us to better understand how the Crusades continue to influence Muslims’ perspectives on the West today.

In fact, the Crusades made colossal impacts on the everyday lives of Muslims and the religion of Islam. The clashes between Islam and Christianity continue to be felt over a millennium later. The world deals with the ramifications of these events each day.

The effects of the Crusades have been researched extensively in the West from a Euro-centric viewpoint. The West has had a strong cultural influence on how the history of the Crusades has been presented to Arab scholars, including contemporary Arab scholars. For instance, beginning in the eighteenth century, Arab scholars translated European books on the Crusades that were written in
French into Arabic

This skewed the manner in which Arab scholars' first documented Islamic history, since the biases in those European accounts were transmitted into Arabic ones.

Historian Jill N. Claster suggests in *Sacred Violence* that “the development of history as an academic discipline, combined with a new interest in reading the medieval sources themselves, led to a desire to assess the crusading era and understand what it meant in the context of Islamic history.” Claster continues by stating that after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, European colonialism “began to be compared by Muslims to that time in the crusading era when Christian forces from Europe overran the Middle East and brought Muslims under the yoke of foreign invaders.” I agree with Claster that the increased interest in history as an academic discipline awakened in western historians an interest in the Islamic perspectives on the Crusades.

In the Islamic world, there were other reasons for renewed interest in the subject. For example, the imagery of the Crusades in all its negative aspects became a powerful tool for contemporary dictators of the Middle East to use as a weapon of propaganda against the West, and became the call by some Middle Eastern leaders for the anti-modernization of the Islamic world.

Furthermore, contemporary Islamic scholar Carole Hillenbrand, who lives in the West, explains...

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1 Jill N. Claster, *Sacred Violence: The European Crusades to the Middle East 1095-1396* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 312-313
2 Ibid., 313.
3 Ibid., 313.
"the memory of the Crusades lingers in the Middle East and colors Muslim perspectives of Europe. It is the memory of an aggressive, backward and religiously fanatic Europe. The historical memory would be reinforced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as imperial Europeans once again arrived to subjugate and colonize territories in the Middle East. Unfortunately, this legacy of bitterness is overlooked by most Europeans when thinking of the Crusades."  

The legacy of the Crusades is a dark moment in history through Islamic eyes. Fear, panic, and apprehension spread throughout the Levant as these westerners marched across the European continent and into the Holy Lands.

The Islamic chroniclers of the Crusades allow us an opportunity to hear the voices and read the thoughts of the past. Chroniclers such as Ibn al-Qalanisi, Usama Ibn Munqidh, and Ibn Jubayr not only allow us to understand past Islamic perspectives on the Crusades of the past, but also their ramifications as felt today.

In this study, I will analyze and answer the following questions: What perspectives did Muslims have of westerners during the Crusades? What were their thoughts as thousands of *Frany*, people of western origin but specifically a term designating the French during the crusades, began to overwhelm the Levant at a time of disunity for Muslims? Did Islamic chroniclers’ perspectives on the Crusades change over time? Why has there not been much scholarship written on the Crusades by contemporary Islamic historians? How did Islamic leaders manipulate *jihad* to their advantage, and drive the *Frany* out of the Near East? Why is it important to use the Crusades as a reference in comprehending modern

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4 Carole Hillenbrand, prologue to *The Crusades Islamic Perspectives* (Chicago Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 590
5 Jon Rothschild, foreword to *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, by Amin Maalouf (New York Schocken Books, 1984), xi
Islamic/Christian relations? These are some of the main questions I will address in this study.

Why ask these questions? I have learned through my research, that there has not been enough acknowledgement of the lack of interest in analyzing Islamic perspectives on the Crusades even by Muslim scholars. Only in the last few decades have the Crusades become an interest again in the Islamic world, and for multiple reasons, some for their historical value, and others simply to increase anti-western sentiment. Whatever the case may be, I suggest that the West should be more aware of Islamic perspectives on the Crusades, for only then will the West begin to grasp the underlying contempt many Muslims have for those living in the West today. I have learned in order to understand the present one must start with the past.

In the following chapters, I will share modern scholars’ views on the Crusades over the past twenty-five years. Next, I will analyze and interpret the perspectives of Arab chroniclers’ eyewitness accounts of the Frankish invasions of the Levant, and will provide a historical background on both the Church on the eve of the Crusades, and the effects of Christian fanaticism on Muslims. Finally, I will conclude with the ramifications of the Crusades, both past and present. I will provide evidence of instances where Muslims and Christians lived in coexistence, and how over time Arab chroniclers adopted to a harsher tone when speaking of those from the West. Thus, I will end my study with how many Muslims continue to use the Crusades as a rallying cry for propaganda against the West in the modern world.
CHAPTER ONE

MODERN SCHOLARS' EVALUATIONS OF MUSLIM NARRATIVE SOURCES

**Modern Scholars' Perspectives and Interpretations of Islamic Sources**

Respected historian Steven Runciman maintains that, "to tell the story from the point of view of the Franks alone or of the Arabs alone or of its chief victims, the Christians of the East, is to miss its significance." He argues that many scholars regard the Crusades as the most tremendous, and romantic of Christian adventures. Others attest that the Crusades were the last of the barbarian invasions. Runciman states that before the Crusades Byzantium and the Arab Caliphate dominated the world. He argues that at their conclusion, power had shifted to Europe, and as Europe began to progress, the Middle East closed its eyes to the rest of the world. I feel the Crusaders, though returning in defeat, took back with them science, technology, medical skills, and other knowledge from the Middle East that catapulted Europe out of the Middle Ages, and into the Renaissance.

Runciman relied on a variety of sources to write his three volumes on the Crusades. He almost entirely analyzed contemporary sources of the First Crusade. As for Greek references, Runciman used the *Alexiad*, by Anna Komnene, and the chronicles of Zonaras and Glycas. Runciman's Latin sources are:

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7 Ibid., xi.
included the chronicle of Raymond of Aguilers, Fulcher of Chartres' *Gesta* from the Council of Clermont, and three other important chroniclers. They were Ekkehard, Abbot of Aura, Radulph of Caen, and Albert of Aachen. Runciman's assessment is that the greatest of Crusader historians that he encountered was William of Tyre. As for Arabic assistance, Runciman received little. He reviewed Ibn al-Qalanisi, Ibn al-Athîr, and also attempted to analyze Armenian and Syriac chronicles. No Armenian or Syriac chronicles had survived except the Armenian chronicle of Matthew of Edessa. Thus, Runciman relied primarily on Latin and Greek sources.

Runciman suggests that, "the supreme duty of the historian is to write history, that is to say, to attempt to record in one sweeping sequence the greater events and movements that have swayed the destinies of man." I argue the only way for an historian to attempt this responsibly is to analyze as many sources as possible, but also to realize one's limitations, and acknowledge them to the audience.

P M Holt in *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East From the Eleventh Century to 1517*, argues that western European sources are abundant, but there has been "no comprehensive modern treatment in English of the Mamluk sultanate, although this was the great power of the eastern Mediterranean for two hundred years or more." Holt brings up a realm, which we have not even

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8 Ibid., 327-331.
9 Ibid., 334-335.
11 P M. Holt, foreword to *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (New York: Longman Publishers 1886), ix
discussed Typically, when western scholarship has considered Islamic perspectives at all, it has usually concentrated on the Arab perspective, continuing to ignore the role of the Persians, Kurds, and Mamluk dynasty in the age of the Crusades. The Mamluk dynasty of Egypt replaced the descendants of Saladin and the Ayyubids for control of Egypt. They eventually unified Syria and Egypt until their fall to the Ottoman empire in 1517.

According to Holt, within the four hundred years surveyed in his book the theme of the political history of the eastern Mediterranean lands was "their progressive unification and ultimate consolidation under the administration of a single Muslim movement." Holt gave high praise to the Mamluks of Egypt, for they united Syria and Egypt, repelled the Mongol invasions, and expelled the Franks from the Levant at Acre in 1291. He argues that the general survey of developments in the centuries of Mamluk rule received uneven treatment by scholars, and that there is a lack of actual primary source materials.

The author does note that there are abundant Arabic sources, from the fifth to the eleventh, and eighth to fourteenth centuries. The typical genre of the time was the chronicle, or narrative. The model of the chronicle was set by Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, in his work Ta’rikh al-rusul wa’ muluk (The History of the Prophets and the Kings). Al-Tabari was a religious scholar who also wrote on the Qur'an and Islamic law. His chronicles covered the time period from the pre-Islamic period to the ‘Abbasid caliphate. Other notable chronicler Holt mentions are Ibn al-Athir, and Ibn al-Dawadari. Both these men made

considerable contributions to the art of the chronicle, Holt declared, "whereas the classical historiography had been adjunct to the religious sciences, chronicles of the type served primarily as literary entertainment – a development described by German modern scholars as Literansierung. This new form of chronicle writing was used in the seventh to thirteenth centuries. Chroniclers of later centuries were different from al-Tabari's works in that he used a theme of providential history of the Muslim community, while others shifted to specific themes in Islamic history."

Another source of Islamic literature Holt analyzed in Islamic historical writing was the royal biography. Chroniclers were closely connected to the rulers whom they wrote about, and Holt took care in assessing the historical value of their work (e.g., Ibn Shaddad for the Sultan Saladin). The downfall of being so closely connected to a ruler was that in Holt's view, "inevitably those acts of the ruler which fit the pattern are presented and emphasized, and thereby a somewhat unrealistic portrait of a paragon and hero of Islam is set before an unwary reader." Historians must always be wary of subject matter they are researching. The last two forms of Islamic literature Holt discusses are the dynastic history, and a biographical dictionary. Dynastic histories are chronicles and a royal biography combined, such as the history of the Zangids by Ibn al-Athir, or the history of the Ayyubids by Ibn Wasil. The biographical dictionary was a genre before modern times and unique to Islam. For example, the obituaries of

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13 Ibid., 208.
14 Ibid., 209-210
the leading men of the Mamluk state between a certain time periods would be recorded in a biographical dictionary.\textsuperscript{15} Holt concludes that, unfortunately, a majority of the archives that the pre-Ottoman Muslim states produced were dispersed and destroyed.\textsuperscript{16} As a result, historians when researching the Near East from a Muslim perspective must rely on the literary sources previously mentioned by Holt. I agree with Holt that when researching the Crusades all realms of research and opposing ideas should be analyzed, not just exclusively the western view.

R. Stephen Humphreys’s *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, deliberately makes the point that no scholar will ever master all they need to know in analyzing any event in history they are researching.\textsuperscript{17} For instance, Humphreys provides an example of what it would require for an historian to adequately assess Syria during the age of the Crusades. First, one would have to have some knowledge of eight languages (including Armenian and Syriac). Next, a historian would have to be extensively knowledgeable of narrative texts, administrative manuals, chancery correspondence (mentioned in Hannes Mohring’s *Saladin-The Sultan and His Times, 1138-1193*), poetry, numismatics, epigraphy, and archaeology. After grasping a sense of the qualifications that Humphreys claims any historian needs in order to effectively analyze history (specifically the Crusades), one will gain a sense of their researching capabilities, which are

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 211.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 213.
absolutely necessary for historians to provide a true understanding of a topic they are researching.  

Humphreys continues his views on sources when he suggests that “showing what resources we have at our disposal, can suggest which problems and lines of inquiry in a field are likely prove to most productive, and what research skills one must acquire in order to pursue them effectively.” A historian must lay out all the pros and cons of their potential sources in conducting research in any field before they begin their study.

Next, Humphreys discusses the various sources he used in analyzing the Islamic history of the Crusades. In general, he began with the Encyclopedia of Islam. Each section has a bibliography, it may be elementary, but it is detailed. Unfortunately, some sections are just dictionary entries, while others provide valuable and true research contributions to our understanding of the Crusades.

Language is a key source for historians to master and utilize in their quest to produce substantial, quality scholarship. Humphreys reminds us that many languages were used in the medieval Islamic world, a great bulk being Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. Arabic was the first language used by Islam, and the Arabic language produced the largest number of texts during the crusading period. The most important documents studied were in classical Arabic, such as

18 Ibid., 3.
19 Ibid., 3.
21 Ibid., 11.
the Qur’an, the Hadith, and ancient poetry in the adab literature style. The understanding of multiple languages does nothing but benefit the historians, and provide them with greater credibility when researching events in history.

Other sources Humphreys mentions are geography and topography, chronology and genealogy, and the analyzing of the Scriptures. Humphreys acknowledges it will most likely be decades before an adequate array of research on atlases is at our disposal. There were none at all produced during the time of the Crusades. Chronology and genealogy obviously establish date and time in Islamic history, but are often extremely frustrating regarding the actual dates when events occurred in Islamic history. The main dispute among historians involve the use of the Hijri calendar, established during the reign of the ‘Rightly Guided Caliphs’ under ‘Umar. It is confusing to western historians in that the Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar, and thus the conversion to Julian/Gregorian dates can be complicated at times. Also, Humphreys relies on the use of scripture as historical evidence, specifically the Qur’an and the Hadith. They are considered by Muslims as the two foundations of Islam, and deeply pervade the daily lives of Islamic communities. These Scriptures are cited in multiple Islamic sources, from coins to monumental inscriptions. Humphreys suggests for practical reasons that a competent historian will identify such citations, for “a good scholar will from the outset try to immerse himself in texts, since he must know the values and

\[\text{22 Ibid., 12.}\]
\[\text{23 Ibid., 16.}\]
\[\text{24 Ibid., 19}\]
attitudes of medieval Muslims even if he cannot fully share them. I along with many of the previous scholars mentioned in this study agree with this premise.

Humphreys is an advocate of analyzing other sources such as coined metals (gold, silver, copper), epigraphy, and archaeology. Coined metals play a large part in the reconstruction of the political, social, and economic life of medieval Islam. Humphreys claims “every coin is a different and authentic reflection of the political and economic system which produced it, it is therefore perfect evidence for that system if only we can learn how to decode it.”

Epigraphy, Humphreys argues is largely neglected by historians, especially in Great Britain and the United States. Epigraphy poses a variety of technical problems, such as the range of scripts, some are crude, and are extraordinarily difficult to decipher. Finally, Humphreys suggests that the most text-minded scholars must make an effort to canvass and utilize possible artistic and archeological evidence, and that very few historians are trained in this field. As an example, during the Crusades glazed ceramics were evidence of some type of aesthetic value. But what type of technology produced them? What were the glazed ceramics’ economic, and commercial values to those who owned them? Were they visual symbols of the crusading period? These are answers archaeologists attempt to discover. Humphreys provides an extensive list of what sources historians need to be aware of when researching any topic, especially a topic so complicated and polarizing as the Crusades.

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25 Ibid., 21.  
26 Ibid., 49.  
27 Ibid., 53.  
28 Ibid., 59-60.
Author and historian Carole Hillenbrand has taken a leading role in modern scholarship, in highlighting Islamic perspectives on the Crusades. Hillenbrand suggests that the Crusades have been extensively studied by Western scholars, but that there has been far less scholarship produced on the Crusades in the Middle East. Hillenbrand declares, “the full, composite story of the Crusades needs, of course, the drawing together of evidence from both sides of the divide to illuminate each other.”  

Hillenbrand suggests that Muslim viewpoints should be presented in order to extinguish stereotypes of the 'old enemy' that are deeply entrenched in Western minds. The topic needs further examination and analysis in order to be understood and modified. As Carole Hillenbrand urges, “it is undoubtedly time to balance the western European view with the Islamic perspective.” There are a range of historical issues that must be analyzed. Examples are Islamic military history, the politico-religious ideologies of Muslims, and the evolution of border societies. Hillenbrand writes that any book written on the Muslim viewpoint on the Crusades should be welcomed, since there is overwhelming evidence from the Western perspective. I agree with Hillenbrand’s view, while researching my topic I discovered there is far more literature from the western perspective than from that of the Near East. Why? I attribute this to my own language bias, and to the

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30 Ibid., 3.
31 Ibid., 3.
32 Ibid., 3.
fact that the University of New Hampshire's libraries do not collect scholarship in Arabic or Turkish the way they collect scholarship in western languages.

Hillenbrand states that contemporary Muslim scholars have not spent time on the Crusades, for they have specialized in other fields. In reality, Hillenbrand believes that the representation of the true Islamic perspectives on the Crusades should be left to Muslim scholars.

However, it should be noted that there are Islamic historians/scholars who have an anti-colonialist's agenda, harbor fervor for Pro-Arab/Pan-Islam nationalism, are for the liberation of Palestine, and support the rise of 'Islamic fundamentalism'. Pan-Islam began to take shape with such men as Maududi who founded, in 1941, *Jama'at-i Islami*, most likely the most important Islamist and Pan-Islamist party of those active at the time, eventually taking hold in Pakistan. Another Pan-Islamist was Faruq Hamada, a professor of Islamic studies in Rabat. "Hamada argued that, none the less, Muslim unity and union were more important than ever, for ideological blocs and political alliances in the contemporary world allowed no place for the mini-states." One could pose the question of whether these anti-western sentiments are the remnants of the crusading period? These Islamic historians/scholars do not necessarily portray the realities of the medieval world. Their works are marred by emotional rhetoric as opposed to factual evidence.

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34 Ibid., 249-250.
Other sorts of bias mar some other works by Islamic scholars. An example of an Islamic chronicler marred at times by his devotion to his ruler is Ibn Shaddad. He was in the services of the Sultan Saladin, and through his chronicle of that Muslim hero Ibn Shaddad was known at times to embellish the facts. Many chroniclers of Ibn Shaddad’s time period, and generations later including Ibn Jubayr, exaggerated what they witnessed. Many Islamic chroniclers followed this practice in order to make their leaders and causes seem more worthwhile.

Finally, Hillenbrand writes that the role of the Turks during the Crusades has been completely underplayed. Indeed, not only is the Seljuk Turks’ role in Syria and Palestine during the Crusades not given enough attention by scholars, but also the roles of Kurds, Persians, Pakistanis, and others. Unfortunately, modern Muslim interest in the Crusades is a resolutely Arab one. Hillenbrand, along with other historians, hopes to inspire Islamic scholars to look at the Crusades in a wider context, including the entire eastern Islamic world.  

Another author whose views on Islamic perspectives I will review is Majid Fakhry, who wrote *The Crusades in Arabic Historiography*. Scholars must re-examine the Euro-centric view of the Crusades, Fakhry argues, in order to better understand Islamic viewpoints of the Crusades. I firmly agree. Fakhry states that the motives of Pope Urban II and Peter the Hermit were essentially spiritual (I disagree with Fakhry regarding the intentions of the pope), “but it should be

36 Ibid., 5.
38 I feel the Pope Urban II’s intentions were not only spiritual, but he also wished to take control of the Byzantine Empire and all its wealth. Pope Urban II was
remembered that the vast number of warriors, whether knights, princes, or ordinary laymen, were almost certainly moved by worldly ambition or greed, best illustrated by the role the Genoese merchants and sailors played in the expedition.\textsuperscript{39} Arrangements were made between the Crusaders, and the merchants to transport themselves, and supplies to the Levant. Agreements were made with merchants to continue to supply the coastal cities after the Crusades had begun in the Levant in order to sustain the control of the holy lands by the westerners. This quotation by Fakhry illustrates the Islamic viewpoint on the Crusaders. Other authors such as Steven Runciman and George Tate concur with Fakhry’s basic premise.\textsuperscript{40} But be mindful, for not all Muslims thought ill of the \textit{Franj}.

Majid Fakhry writes that Arab chroniclers have two major themes when it comes to their writings on the Crusades. First, that the conditions on the ground in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt led to internal strife within the Islamic community, resulting in the success of the First Crusade by the \textit{Franj}, thus creating a condition of polarization in the region.\textsuperscript{41} The second theme Fakhry writes of is that over time contempt for the \textit{Franj} came to dominate Arab chroniclers and historians. Islamic chroniclers continuously spoke of the Franks’ primitive ways of living, their gross social and conjugal habits, and their crude medical practices. Fakhry states “the most explicit record of these Frankish modes of behavior is attempting to reunify Christendom.” Both Jotischky’s \textit{Crusading and the Crusader States}, and also Riley-Smith’s \textit{The Crusades A History}.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 61
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 62
given by Usama Ibn Munqidh in his autobiography, entitled *Kitab al-l’tibar (Book of Edification)*. As mentioned previously, I will be using Usama Ibn Munqidh’s book *The Book of Contemplation, Islam and the Crusades* as one of my two primary sources for the initial reactions of Muslims to the Frankish invasion.

In conclusion, Fakhry states that

“as the tide began to turn in the course of the twelfth-century, the tone of Arab chroniclers began to change, from lamentation for the plight of the Muslims, torn apart by dissention and strife, to jubilation at their success in vanquishing the Franks and recapturing Jerusalem and other occupied parts of Syria and Palestine from the “accursed” Franks.”

I agree with the themes Majid Fakhry presents as reasons for the success of the Franks during the First Crusade. Fakhry’s intent is to enlighten the West that there is another perspective to the era of the Crusades, the Islamic perspective on the Crusades.

Andrew Jotischky suggests in his book *Crusading and Crusader States*,

“in perception if not historical fact, there is a direct correlation between the Crusades and current conflicts, especially but by no means exclusively in the regions in which crusading ideals were first applied. Solutions to such conflicts can only come from understanding both the historical realities and of the emotive responses generated by partial knowledge of those realities.”

Jotischky, Holt, and I agree that in order for historians to be found valid in their research it is crucial and necessary to analyze as many perspectives of an event.

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42 Ibid, 63
43 Ibid, 65
44 Andrew Jotischky, preface to the *Crusading and the Crusader States* (England Pearson Education Limited, 2004), xiii
as possible. In this study we are combating the Euro-centric views of westerners, and allowing them to understand that there are multiple sides to any story.

Jotischky, as many authors, repeats that there have been scores of books written on the Crusades, and he believes along with myself that many of the books published about the Crusades provide the same information. Jotischky asks several questions. Is it possible to compose a single volume study on such an expanding and complex field of scholarly study as the Crusades, without misleading readers by faults, omissions, and flaws in balance? How was crusading as a theory practiced, and how did it evolve? How were Crusades planned and executed? Why are the Crusades considered an essential part of medieval society? How did the crusaders produce a distinctive western society in the Near East and sustain it for almost two centuries? Why did crusading continue to appeal to European society despite continued military failures in the Levant after the First Crusade? These are the major questions Jotischky asked of his sources.

There were many sources Jotischky used in order to convey that the essence of historical writing is the reflection on the meanings of the events and evidence, and for this reason, no two historians will ever write the same book on the Crusades. Jotischky started with what he considered the best scholarly surveys of the Crusades, written by H.E. Mayer (1972, new ed. 1988) and Jean.

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45 Ibid., xii.
46 Ibid., xiii.
47 Ibid., xii.
Richard (1999) \(^{48}\) He focused on secondary literature, since he wrote that it gives
great depth to the topics one is researching. But I disagree. I firmly believe any
research must utilize all the sources available, but especially primary sources.
Although a historian must remember in what direction the authors of primary
sources are coming from, they are essential for completed research on any
historical topic. Another pitfall of Jotischky is that he restricted his sources to
English works, while acknowledging the important contributions, which the
French, Germans, Italians, Spanish, and other peoples made on the Crusades \(^{49}\)
Obviously, if a scholar is knowledgeable in a foreign language, they are obligated
to use any research in order to better enhance their conclusions and make them
overwhelmingly valid.

Jotischky introduces three distinct types of historians that have varying
claims about when the Crusades ended, and began. There are three groups, the
generalists, traditionalists, and pluralists, who all view how to research the
Crusades differently. The generalists, such as Carl Erdmann and Tyerman, argue
that the Crusades are a long-standing tradition including holy war and
ecclesiastical politics. They argue against any particular distinctiveness to any
aspect of the Crusades that took place in the Levant form the eleventh to the
thirteenth centuries \(^{50}\). The generalists wished to place the First Crusade within
the long-standing tradition of Church policies \(^{51}\)

\(^{48}\) Andrew Jotischky, *Crusading and the Crusader States* (England: Pearson Education
Limited, 2004), 1.  
\(^{49}\) Ibid., 3.  
\(^{50}\) Ibid., 9.  
\(^{51}\) Ibid., 9.
The traditionalist's viewpoint is that only movements launched by the papacy to recover or preserve the Holy Land for Christendom were considered Crusades. From the traditionalist's viewpoint, the First Crusade defined crusading for all times, since the Crusaders attained their goal, recovering the Holy city of Jerusalem from Saracen rulers.\(^{52}\)

This final group of historians that I strongly align myself with are the pluralists. These historians, such as Riley-Smith, Siberry, Housley, Maier, and Phillips\(^ {53}\) argue that all wars called by the pope to fight against the enemies of the Church and Christendom were legitimate Crusades,\(^ {54}\) where papal offerings were introduced as spiritual rewards for joining the Crusades.\(^ {55}\) Pluralists consider the Church's role in the Reconquista of Spain, the conquests by Christians of pagans in the Baltic region, the Church's attacks against heretics living in western Europe and ensuing armed conflict with Christian enemies of the papacy all part of the crusading period. Pluralists enjoy widening the Crusading historiography to include regions other than the eastern Mediterranean and enemies of Christendom other than the Arabs.\(^ {56}\) If one agrees with the pluralist's viewpoint, historians will decide, through the archaeological and documentary records, that westerners had little choice but to live in close proximity to the indigenous people.

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\(^{52}\) Ibid., 9.


\(^{54}\) Ibid., 9.

\(^{55}\) Jill N. Claster, *Sacred Violence. The European Crusades to the Middle East 1095-1396* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 316-317.

of the region. Jotischky explains the "reason for attempting this book is that the subject has never been so crucial to our understanding of the future, as well as the past, of western society." I agree that it is not only crucial for western society to understand the Crusades, but also those in the Near East as well.

James E. Lindsay, in *Daily Life in the Medieval Islamic World*, suggests that the Islamic world during the Crusading period represented the best of what human civilization had to offer with respect to political order, military prowess, economic vitality, civil society, and intellectual and scientific inquiry. Lindsay claims that most Americans possess a range of religious, cultural, political, and linguistic reference points when studying medieval Europe. I agree with Lindsay’s quotation when he claims that "when we turn our attention to the Islamic world, most of us have few, if any, points of reference at all." Lindsay concludes that historians must appreciate the fact that many religious, political, social values, and expectations are fundamentally different from our own. The sooner researchers and historians come to this conclusion, the better off society will be as a whole.

For the world will gain a clearer understanding of Islamic perspectives on the Crusades.

Lindsay concentrates on such themes and answers questions about the life of Muhammad, the early Islamic conquests, ethnicity in the medieval world, the

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57 Ibid., 22.
60 Ibid., xiii.
61 Ibid., xiv.
role of geography and environment, the political characteristics of medieval societies, the fragmentation of the caliphate beginning in the mid-ninth century, and the development of Islamic law (Sha'na). Finally, he analyzes the topic of Islamic mysticism. What do we know about these topics and Islamic society during the Crusades? It depends on the sources, time period, and on the specific question(s) asked. Lindsay relies on such historians as R J C Broadhurst, Gabrieli, Hillenbrand, Holt, and Humphreys. Through utilizing these sources, Lindsay hopes to reconstruct an accurate past of the Crusades despite the multiple problems our present sources may have.

There is a consensus among many non-Muslim scholars that skepticism is appropriate when 'in-house' Islamic accounts researched to clarify events of the Crusades are used, and especially when they refer to religious origins of events or religious dogma. Another problem historians encounter is that a vast majority of the Islamic narrative sources are dated several centuries after the events they describe. As a result, these accounts lose credibility since they were not recorded immediately as the events occurred, thus the potential for embellishments, contradictions, and falsifications of events may happen. Historian Fred M Donner suggests that the "chronological discrepancies and absurdities abound, as do flat contradictions in the meaning of events or even, less frequently, on their fundamental course. Many accounts present information that seems clearly anachronistic, others

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62 Ibid., xv.
64 Ibid., 7.
65 Ibid., 7.
provide ample evidence of embellishment or outright invention to serve the purpose of political or religious apologetic  

I agree with Donner in suggesting that historians must be apprehensive, skeptical, and ask the right questions when analyzing the chronicles of any culture. All historians have a bias, and at times obvious anachronisms. Researchers must be wary and aware of these transgressions that may occur when analyzing history.

In Norman Housley's *Contesting the Crusades*, he suggests that the interactions between the crusaders and the Near East were almost completely destructive. I do not agree with this assessment. Housley continues, 'it has always been apparent that crusading exercised a big impact on relations between Catholic Christianity and other faiths, and it is hard to counter the argument that the impact was entirely destructive.' This premise is false, but though there was much destruction and loss of life during the Crusades, many valuable lessons and cultural exchanges (religious, political, social, commodities) occurred due to the crusading period.

Housley acknowledged that "theologically, legally, and sacramentally, warfare was firmly accommodated within the Church's world." The Church offered prayers, blessed banners, and accompanied crusading armies into battle. Author H E J Cowdrey claimed, "Gregory was the most warlike pope who had ever sat in St Peter's chair." He associated warfare with the goals of Church.

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66 Ibid, 7
67 Norman Housley *Contesting the Crusades* (MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 144
68 Ibid, 145
69 Ibid, 146
reform. The *Alexiad*, written by Anna Komnene “viewed the casual association of western European churchmen with combat as scandalous.”

Housley praises scholars such as David Bachrach, Ernst-Dieter Hehl, and Frederick Russell as authorities on the militarism of the medieval Church. This militarism played a key role in the overall centralization of the Church. Housley suggests, “there can be no doubt that crusading was one of the features of medieval life that gave Catholic Europe its remarkable rate of growth.” Housley concludes by his statement that it is essential to maintain a balanced approach when undertaking in-depth, historiographical research of the Crusades. I agree with this, and with Benjamin Kedar when he states “having observed the damaging impact of the prejudice and passion of some of our predecessors' works, we may sensitize ourselves to notice it more readily in the products of our contemporaries.” This is incontestable, for historians must search for a full and measured perspective when analyzing history.

David Bachrach's translation of Hannes Mohring's *Saladin-The Sultan and His Times, 1138-1193*, suggests that there are very few medieval historians who can read Arabic sources and thoroughly engage themselves with Islamic history. Riley-Smith, Mohring, and I agree with this premise. Mohring claims that research on the Crusades continues to neglect Muslim affairs, such as many of the previous scholars discussed in this study.

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70 Ibid., 145
71 Ibid., 145
72 Ibid., 165
Mohring suggests that “the Arabic and Latin sources for the history of Saladin and his opponents are very rich,” and provides a rare opportunity for historians to see examples of Muslim life in the Middle Ages. But historians must remember that along with these sources comes propaganda in favor of the ruler, bias, and panegyric texts. The Sultan Saladin’s history is recorded in a form of Islamic literature termed dynastic chronology. It is a genre between a chronicle and a biography, and many Islamic chroniclers took part in devoting themselves to the promotion of the Ayyubid dynasty, which Saladin founded. Chroniclers such as Ibn Wasil, Abu Shama, Ibn Jubayr, and Usama Ibn Munqidh all wrote glowingly of Saladin’s life.

Mohring utilized sources such as Arab chronicles, which as discussed previously are the most basic genre of Islamic writing. Chroniclers such as Ibn al-Athir, and Abu al-Fida recorded the actions of Saladin during the Crusades. A historian when analyzing the chronicles can see the discrepancies between the two historians. Ibn al-Athir long had worked under the service of a rival dynasty before serving Saladin, and Ibn al-Athir does not always portray him well. The chronicler Abu al-Fida was a member of the Ayyubid house, and a descendant of Saladin. Thus, Abu al-Fida wrote with a more outward, positive bias toward Saladin than Ibn al-Athir ever chronicled.

Other sources that Mohring discusses are Arabic papyri from Egypt, which are plentiful from the crusading period, and are now just being analyzed by

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74 Ibid, vii
75 Paul M Cobb, introduction to *Saladin-The Sultan and His Times, 1138-1193*, by Hannes Mohring (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), xxi
76 Ibid, xx
specialists. Also, Arabic chancery documents that were models of the genre (basically semi-documents) appeared frequently in sources, and are described in a collection of correspondence of al-Qadi al-Fadil, Saladin’s chief of staff. Semi-documents were not as detailed as later documents, and used by early Islamic chroniclers to gather information about the past. These chancery documents were also mentioned as sources in Humphreys’s book, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*. Analyzing all these sources is vital in order to make clear perceptions and distinctions in relation to the Islamic perspectives on the Crusades.

Another historian of the Crusades is Jonathan Riley-Smith. He, along with Hillenbrand, criticizes the attitudes of Islamicists, “to whom the Crusades and the Latin settlements are of marginal significance.” Riley-Smith also criticizes western scholars when he states, “it is curious how peripheral they have proved to be – how many Crusade historians have bothered to learn Arabic?” That is, the Islamic perspectives on the Crusades have not been given enough attention by scholars of the Middle East or West.

Jonathan Riley-Smith asserts that the perception of most modern Muslims of the Crusades dates from the end of the nineteenth-century, consisting of feelings of alienation fostered by imperialism. As with Hillenbrand stating that both sides of the evidence (Near East and West) need to be analyzed in order to illuminate the other, Jonathan Riley-Smith’s message is his own. “It is that we

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77 Ibid, xx
78 Ibid, 3
cannot hope to comprehend – and thereby confront – those who hate us so much unless we understand how they are thinking, and this involves opening our eyes to the actuality – not the imagined reality – of our own past.” I feel a majority of western scholars miss Riley-Smith’s message to this day, that both perspectives of history must be analyzed in order to better inform the general public of the true realities of history.

Muslims, Riley-Smith contends, look back on the Crusades with indifference and complacency. The Muslims eventually expelled the Crusaders from the Levant with the fall of Acre in 1291. They won the battle. Also, Riley-Smith contends that Arab writers presently dwell on the typical stereotypes of the Franj that the Franj were unhygienic, dull, coarse, sexually lax, gullible, and hypocritical. Though this may have been the case with some westerners, not all Christians and Muslims separated themselves from one another while inhabiting the Levant.

Riley-Smith states that, once the Crusaders took Jerusalem and established settlements, and after several counter-attacks by Muslim forces, both sides reached a modus vivendi (establishing an agreement to disagree) with the new settlers (Franj). After the Frankish invasion of the Levant, and the taking of Jerusalem, Riley-Smith asserts that Muslims thought of the westerners as no more than an irritant in the Near East. Muslims would soon learn that these westerners were not leaving, and more seemed to be traveling to the Levant as

80 Ibid., 71.
81 Ibid., 69.
82 Ibid., 69.
time passed after the First Crusade. But the Crusaders' prolonged stay in the
Levant eventually led westerners to become more of an irritant to Muslims than
Riley-Smith first suggested. As a result, Saladin had finally united Egypt and
Syria. One of his many goals was to reclaim Jerusalem and, rid the Levant of the
Crusaders.

Riley-Smith contends that the Turkish leader Nur ad-Din exploited *jihad*
against the crusaders, and he used *jihad* as propaganda to motivate the Muslims
to counter-attack against the *Franj*. Nur ad-Din used the thought of an occupying
force as propaganda to rally Muslims, and unite in *jihad* against the Crusaders.

Vehicles for the propaganda that Nur ad-Din exported throughout the Muslim
world included poetry, letters, treatises, sermons, and inscriptions. Once Nur ad-
Din died and Saladin supplanted him as ruler, he took up the two projects that his
predecessor had pursued against the *Franj*. The Sultan Saladin was successful
in retaking the Levantine coastline and Jerusalem (which Saladin did in 1187),
and also forging Muslim religious and political unity throughout the Islamic world.

The viewpoint of Riley-Smith towards the Islamic perspectives of the
Crusades is that Islamic scholars hold many of the same stereotypes as western
scholars. I find it refreshing that though a majority of Riley-Smith's publications
are concerned with the perspective of the West, he is aware of the fact that it is
vital to understand and analyze the other side of any disagreement in history.

Paul E. Chevedden suggests in his article, “The Islamic View and the
Christian View of the Crusades: A New Synthesis,” that conventional wisdom

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83 Ibid., 69.
84 Ibid., 6.
states that the Islamic world and the western world hold extremely different views of the Crusades. He views crusading popes and contemporary Muslim authors in the same light, and proposes that the crusading period began before 1095, with the Reconquista of Spain.

Chevedden argues that modern scholars should not fully accept what Islamic evidence tells historians about the Crusades, such as Islamic chronicles. Modern scholars should review Islamic sources, but they must keep in mind that many Islamic sources are tainted by various kinds of bias. He continues that modern scholars cannot bring themselves to adopt a self-understanding of what the Muslim perspectives were during the Crusades. It is difficult for many western scholars to have a self-understanding of the Crusades, due to their limitations as historians. For example, scholars cannot comprehend the many languages of the Middle East, specifically Arabic, Turkish, or Persian. Chevedden claims that modern scholarship from the western sources passes over the Islamic interpretations of the Crusades, and many historians consider Islamic perspectives on the Crusades irrelevant.

Chevedden claims that the Crusades started with the Reconquista of Toledo, and other Spanish cities in 1085. The crusading influence then moved to Sicily, with the conquest by the Normans in 1091. The Crusaders then launched their next campaign against Levant, culminating with an attack on Syria in 1097.

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86 Ibid., 185.
87 Ibid., 182.
88 Ibid., 185.
Trends of Contemporary Scholars and Approach to Study

Several trends emerge from a review of contemporary scholarship on the Crusades. In general, the West has not sufficiently taken into account Muslim perspectives on the Crusades. There are many reasons that factor into this anomaly. In order to comprehend and analyze the current perspectives on the Crusades, it can be argued that one must begin with the initial Islamic chroniclers. Also, contemporary historians provide keen insight as to why understandings of the Crusades are so important in shaping perceptions of the West in the Islamic world today. I have shown that western scholars seem to research the Crusades more than Muslims, who find them less interesting. Secondly, those Muslim scholars who do study the Crusades often do so with an obvious agenda and bias. They tend to use scholarship to whip up anti-colonialists sentiment. Lastly, that contemporary Muslim scholarship is predominantly Arab related, thus marginalizing the roles of other Islamic groups. By discussing these Muslim chroniclers/historians, I hope to provide a better understanding on why the Islamic world perceives the West with such apprehension and distrust.

My approach to this study will use primarily Islamic sources as evidence, including chroniclers and historians, to assist those readers in the western world in acquiring a better understanding of Islamic perspectives of the Crusades. My work is especially intended for those who have only been exposed to a predominantly western historical viewpoint of the Crusades. Scholarly attitudes in the West have changed drastically with the last decade. A greater effort is being made by western scholars to understand, and interpret the Islamic perspectives.
They are relying more on Islamic sources, learning Arabic, and using other tools to enhance the research skills needed for this topic. I will analyze the evidence, support my findings, and draw conclusions as to why it is invaluable for the students of the Crusades to better comprehend Islamic views of the crusading period. Some Islamic translations may not be accurate, or are purposely embellished by their authors, and will be addressed when referred to. Later interpretations of the crusaders typically show an outright contempt and biases against the Fray, or anything that appears of western origin.

The initial evidence I will use to support my study comes from two Islamic chroniclers Ibn al-Qalanisi and Usama Ibn Munqidh. These two Muslim men documented the events of the Frankish invasion of the Levant as it unfolded. I will also use the writings of other Islamic scholars who produced chronicles well after the re-taking of Jerusalem by Saladin in 1187. Finally, I shall refer to contemporary authors and historians, and share their views on the scholarship of Islamic perspectives of the Crusades.

Why must we as a society bother to learn both eastern and western perspectives on history? I ardently believe that a majority of the western world is ignorant, apprehensive, and afraid regarding the history and inhabitants of the Near East. The goal of my study is to allow the historical enthusiast to experience the Crusades through the eyes of those Muslims living in the Levant at that time. I hope this study persuades and opens the minds of westerners to see those who inhabited the Near East during the Crusades in a different light. I will also show that at times both Christians and Muslims lived in direct contact and harmony with
one another. On a global scale, I hope that this cohabitation, the living in peace of multiple cultures will be possible one day soon in the near future. The unknown I argue should not intimidate, and that is why this study will show westerners that those who practiced Islam during the Crusades were as human as those practicing Christianity in the West.
CHAPTER TWO

ARAB CHRONICLERS OF THE CRUSADES  EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

**Perspectives of Arab Chroniclers: Frankish Invasions of the Levant**

In this chapter I will provide Islamic perspectives on the Crusades and analyze the Arab chroniclers who first encountered the Crusaders. Also, the chapter will include the evaluation of chroniclers who wrote of the Crusades after almost a century of enduring western occupation of their homelands. I will examine from an Islamic viewpoint such topics as Muslim/Frankish military confrontations, and offer some historical background on the Church on the eve of the Crusades. Through examining the perspectives of what Arab chroniclers wrote, I will illustrate how the Crusades affected Islamic perspectives of the past and the present.

This chapter will aim for a better understanding of why some Muslims (both past and present) hold, or held, contempt, apprehension, a lack of interest in modernization, and sometimes hatred towards the West. Westerners who are ignorant of the history of Islam, and the cultures of the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia often skew their perceptions based on the unknown. This chapter will present an understanding of how many Muslims acquired their initial perceptions of the West. For many, the first mass encounters with the West occurred during what was later termed the Crusades.

In analyzing the record of those experiences that we find in Islamic sources of the time, it is important to note at the outset that many Arab chroniclers wrote in
a genre of Arabic literature termed *adab*. This genre of Arabic literature is defined as, "the improvement on one’s understanding of instruction and experience, it results in civility and becomes a means of achieving social goals.\(^{89}\) This form of literature aimed to please the readers, at times to divert their attention, and also to provide a form of instruction for Muslims. The chronicler or historian who used *adab* was not bound to tell the truth.\(^{90}\) The *adab* was a key concept in medieval Islamic culture. It required knowledge of history, poetry, ideas, proverbs, parallels, precedents, and a correct and pleasing use of the Arabic language. At the time of the Crusades and beyond, it was the social and intellectual currency of the elite and those who aspired to be a part of it.\(^{91}\) The evidence will show that there was a more abundant use of stereotypes and negative connotations against the *Franj* in this form of Arabic literature as western occupation of the Levant continued.

In modern scholarship *adab* literature sometimes represents the secular dimension of Islamic culture, or Islamic humanism. The term *adab* is a catch-all to denote any work, or literary form that is both instructive and pleasurable.\(^{92}\) Rulers were expected to learn the *adab* literature. Also, courtiers and politicians were expected to use *adab* when dealing with rulers, and those who mastered the art were often touted for a higher political office, especially during the ‘Abbasid

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\(^{90}\) Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Chicago Fitztroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 260

\(^{91}\) Josef W Meri, ed, *Medieval Islamic Civilization*, 13

\(^{92}\) Josef W Meri, ed, *Medieval Islamic Civilization*, 14
dynasty. Adab literature became infused into all facets of Islamic culture, and those who mastered the literary form benefited greatly.

**The Caliphate and Christendom**

As Carole Hillenbrand stated, “Europe’s first encounter with Islam was the result of the new Muslim state, established after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632.” As a result of the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the four ‘Rightly Guided’ caliphs as known to Muslims oversaw a majority of Islamic affairs. The Qur’an was the word of Allah (God), not the caliphs. The expansionist philosophies of the caliphs and Islamic influence flourished for over two centuries after the death of the Prophet. Islam stretched from the Near East, across North Africa, and all the way to the Pyrenees of southern France.

The state of Islam transformed rapidly, from its height in the eight and ninth centuries with the ‘Abbasid caliphate, to its disintegration in the tenth and eleventh centuries. A contributing factor of the ‘Abbasid downfall was the caliphate’s policy of allowing Seljuk Turks, who were originally slaves to the ‘Abbasid caliphate, to gain military power and eventually run the ‘Abbasid government. The ‘Abbasid caliphate had become a figurehead. As a result of Muslim disarray, small clans based on family ties thrived throughout Syria and Palestine. Also, turmoil struck the Islamic world at the end of the eleventh century. Leading figures among the Seljuk Turks and the Fatimids of Egypt were either killed or died mysteriously.

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94 Carole Hillenbrand, Prologue to *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, (Chicago Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 15
95 Ibid., 15
96 Ibid., 15
1092 the deaths of the Seljuk chief minister (wazir) Nizam al-Mulk, the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadi, and the Seljuk Sultan Malikshah left an enormous political vacuum in Seljuk dominated territory. Two years later in 1094, the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir, who had ruled for forty-eight years, died, and also the caliph’s vizier, Badr al-Jamali. Losing such key figures in the Islamic world in such a short period led to contention and decentralization in both Syria and Egypt. The Islamic world was not prepared for its first encounters with the Crusaders, and would have to struggle as a result.

At the Council of Clermont in 1095, Pope Urban II made a plea to all of Christendom to come to the aid of their Christian brothers in Constantinople. The Pope claimed that Christendom and her holy sites were under attack, and that western Christians needed to organize to save Constantinople and Jerusalem from Muslims. This began the First Crusade, in the year 1096. It was eventually successful, from the western point of view, with the capture of Jerusalem in 1099. The Second Crusade was launched in 1145, after Edessa fell to Muslim forces. The Crusading forces reached Jerusalem spent and broken, and then besieged Damascus. The Second Crusade ended in failure, from a western point of view. The Third Crusade saw the West romanticize the Crusades, with leaders such as King Richard I and the Sultan Saladin, who clashed several times. They were both well-respected leaders, and known for their chivalrous behavior.

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97 Ibid., 18-19
Crusade also ended in failure from the western point of view, since Jerusalem was not retaken. The Fourth Crusade ended in 1204 with western Christians fighting eastern Christians for the city of Constantinople. The Crusaders eventually won, and sacked the city. Neither Jerusalem, nor any of the Levant coastal cities were ever taken during that Crusade, making it another western failure. Subsequent Crusades ended with the same result, and in 1291 the Mamluks of Egypt took Acre, and the remainder of the Christian cities on the Levant coastline.

Respected historian Carole Hillenbrand and others have discussed psychological responses Muslims had to the Frankish invasion. Hillenbrand suggests that negative perceptions of westerners can be traced to tenth-century *adab* Islamic literature. ¹⁰⁰ There was outrage and horror among those Muslims who first experienced the *Franj*, as they descended into the Levant. The remainder of the Islamic world, however, was preoccupied, and oblivious to the duress of Muslims living in Asia Minor and the Levant. Frankish invasions of the Orient affected Muslims who lived under Frankish rule, Muslim leadership, religious classes, and the territories adjacent to the Crusader states. ¹⁰¹ I will now allow Islamic chroniclers to provide the evidence as to why Muslims had and continue to have definitive perspectives on the Crusades.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 247-248.
Arab Chroniclers of the Crusades

Al-Tabari (839-923) deserves recognition although his work pre-dates the Crusades, since so many later Islamic historians refer to al-Tabari in their work. There is common consent among historians that al-Tabari has written the most universal history of Islam. Al-Tabari's emphasis was on biblical people and prophets, the legendary versus actual history of Iran, the rise of Islam in great detail, the life of the Prophet Mohammad, and the history of the Islamic world from creation until 915.

What were al-Tabari's sources? He was reluctant to speak of his personal life, but provides a biographer with the names of scholars that he had personal contact with. While analyzing al-Tabari's work, it is imperative to recognize those sources. Authorities, colleagues, students, and acquaintances. If al-Tabari was known to say, "I was told," or "we were told," the common understanding was that he had direct personal contact with one of those scholars, although we do not know how close. That is why Franz Rosenthal also argues that, "in sum, we are faced with the fact that al-Tabari's own words, as far as they are preserved, are a very limited source of hard biographical data." Yet Franz Rosenthal also argues that, "unless there is irrefutable proof to the contrary, we must assume the reports reflect reality, and that idealizing

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104 Al-Tabari, introduction to *The History of al-Tabari*, 5-6.
105 Ibid., 7
descriptions depict, if not reality, then something equally and more important, namely, the perception of contemporaries. In either case, they provide legitimate material for the biographer, to be used, it is true, with appropriate caution.\(^{106}\)

When analyzing, interpreting, and using al-Tabari as a source, we must be wary, but we must also be aware of the outstanding contributions he made to Islamic literature, and history. For example, later Islamic historians built their own histories on the foundation of al-Tabari's work. It was common for figures such as Ibn al-Athir to shorten the history of al-Tabari's work, and then add subsequent history beginning at the point where al-Tabari left off. The constant theme among chroniclers was that al-Tabari was always the starting point of their chronicles.\(^{107}\)

There are many Arab chroniclers to choose from when discussing Islamic perspectives on the Crusades. The two most valuable Islamic chroniclers who lived during the initial crusades were Ibn al-Qalanisi (1073-1160), and Usama Ibn Munqidh (1095-1188). Ibn al-Qalanisi was a Damascene chronicler and young scholar from a family of notables. He was twenty-three when the Franks arrived in 1096, and recorded the events as westerners drifted toward Damascus.\(^{108}\) Usama Ibn Munqidh was born in northern Syria, on the banks of the Orontes River. An uncle, who saw him as a rival to the clan, exiled Usama. He worked for many of the most distinguished courts in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. This allowed Usama to

\(^{106}\) Ibid., 10.

\(^{107}\) Ibid., 136.

\(^{108}\) Amin Maalouf, prologue to The Crusades Through Arab Eyes (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), xvi.
observe his new and intriguing neighbors, the Fray. Usama’s last patron was the Sultan Saladin.

Baha al-Din Ibn Shaddad was in the service of Saladin, and wrote the *Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*. Ibn Shaddad (1145-1234) studied as a youth the Qur’an, Hadith (Prophetic Tradition), and Sha’na (Muslim law). He led an academic life, but was eventually summoned to the sultan Saladin in 1188, and permanently enrolled in the service of the Sultan for the remaining days of his life. After the death of Saladin, Ibn Shaddad prioritized peaceful transfers of power within the Sultan’s family. Toward the end of his life Ibn Shaddad founded a madrassa (Islamic school) in Aleppo. This madrassa was for the teaching of Sha’na law, and after his death his home became a Sufi khanqah, a center for study and devotion.

The Islamic chronicler that I feel maintains the greatest amount of credibility since he was the earliest Arab historian to write about the Crusades is Ibn al-Qalanisi. He was twenty-three and a young scholar when the Fray arrived in 1096. Thankfully for historians and others, Ibn al-Qalanisi recorded the actions of the Crusaders as they drifted towards Damascus. Ibn al-Qalanisi stated, “in that year, news began to trickle in about the appearance of Fray troops coming down from the Sea of Marmara in an innumerable multitude. People took fright. This information was confirmed by the Seljuk King Kilij Arslan, whose territory was

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110 D.S. Richards, introduction to *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, by Baha al-Din Ibn Shaddad (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 1-3
111 Amin Maalouf, prologue to *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), xvi
closest to the Franj. Arslan ruled much of Asia Minor, which his forces had recently taken from the Byzantine Greeks. Nicea was the capital of the territory, which still housed more Byzantine churches than Muslim mosques. Arslan and the Seljuk Turks would be the first to encounter the Franj. Ibn al-Qalanisi’s chronicle is a rich source for the first period of the Crusades, and is written in a narrative form. He writes from first-hand experience of the First and Second Crusades up to the time of Nur ad-Din’s entry into the city of Damascus.

Military confrontations between Christians and Muslims were numerous during the crusading period between 1095-1291. Ibn al-Qalanisi wrote that Arslan knew the Franj were approaching, but he did not fear them. He was more concerned with Turkish rivals within his territory than the Franj. This helps explain why the First Crusade was successful in marching down the coast of the Levant, and re-taking Jerusalem.

Ibn al-Qalanisi collected through his observations of the Franj other accounts of the Christians and Muslims in military engagements. Although Ibn al-Qalanisi’s chronicle is a narrative, we begin to see his perspectives of the Franj. He did recognize their military prowess.

For instance, Ibn al-Qalanisi wrote of a confrontation that would be held just outside Dorylaeum. Arslan and Danishmend the Wise (typically a rival to

113 Ibid., 3
Arslan for territory) were to confront the Frani. Arslan and Danishmend were anxious, but confident. There seemed only a small force of Frani that had departed from Nicea. The Turkish army consisted exclusively of light cavalry and archers, whereas the Frani were the perfect masters of the art of defense. The first impressions of the crusader knights and their mounts struck overwhelming fear in many Muslims. The Frani wore heavy armor and were sometimes mounted as well. The battle went on for hours. In a move that stunned the Muslims, three Frankish forces surrounded the Turkish army, and ended the conflict. The Muslims forces completely underestimated the will and military techniques of the Frani in battle.116 As Ibn al-Qalanisi stated, “the Frani cut the Turkish army to pieces. They killed, pillaged, and took many prisoners who were sold into slavery.” Ibn al-Qalanisi went on to say that “when this event, so shameful for Islam, became known, there was a real panic. Dread and anxiety swelled to enormous proportions.”117

As a result of the decimation of the Turkish army by Frankish forces, tremors of despair were felt throughout the entire coastline of the Levant. Muslims became fearful of these Christian Frankish knights, and of the atrocities that Muslims had begun to hear the Frani had committed. The qadi (judge) Abu Sa’ad al-Harawi would later sound the first call for a unified Islamic response to

116 Ibid, 16
117 Ibid, 17
the advance of the Crusaders and the slaughter they inflicted upon the Muslims.  

Upon the arrival of the Crusades, the Muslims felt a mixture of fear and contempt for the Crusaders. Some Muslims and especially Arab chroniclers claimed that their culture was superior, but that they had lost their combative spirit. Atrocities committed by the Crusaders at Ma’arra would further contribute to the chasm between Muslims and Christians, and slowly awakened the Islamic combative spirit.

The Crusaders arrived in Ma’arra in December of 1098. Their leader Bohemond promised to spare the lives of the inhabitants if the crusaders could take quarter in buildings that did not house residents. The city’s only defense was its militia. Ma’arra decided to defend itself only with its militia against Bohemond and the crusading fighting force. The result was carnage. The historian Ibn al-Athir in my opinion most likely inflated the death totals, when he attested, “for three days they put people to the sword, killing more than a hundred thousand people and taking many prisoners.” Other Arab historians may have inflated them too. But even Frankish chronicler Radulph of Caen confirmed that carnage and insanity overwhelmed the city, writing that “in Ma’arra our troops boiled pagan

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120 Ibid., 38-39.
adults in cooking pots, they impaled children on spits and devoured them grilled "121

Ibn al-Qalanisī is correct when he stated that the memories of these atrocities, preserved and transmitted by local poets and oral tradition, shaped an image of the Franj that would not easily fade 122 The esteemed poet, chronicler, and warrior Usama Ibn Munqīdh had written as early as 1095 that “all those who were well-informed about the Franj saw them as beasts superior in courage and fighting ardour but nothing else, just as animals are superior in strength and aggression ”123 Ma’arra and other events were to confirm that impression and shape subsequent Islamic perspectives of the Crusades, in the past and up to the present

Usama Ibn Munqīdh was a Syrian warrior, courtier, distinguished man of letters, and a specialist in classical Arabic poetry (adab literature) The poet was born at Shayzar, located in northern Syria, on July 4, 1095 124 Usama, like Ibn al-Qalanisī, observed the manners and customs of the Latin settlers, and also engaged the Franj in battle Usama generally indulged in the common stereotypes of the Franj, stressing their lack of refinement, low intelligence and animal qualities I agree that Usama did fall victim to Arab chroniclers’ tendencies to stereotype the Franj at the time of the Crusades Many of Usama’s writings concerned two key elements of the Franj their regional politics, and their social

121 Ibid., 39.
122 Ibid., 39.
123 Ibid., 39.
relations i.e., as participants in and observers of medicines, laws, and religion. He was also knowledgeable about their military qualities.

Usama wrote of one of his encounters with the *Franks* (God curse them) are the most cautious of all men in war. When referring to foreigners in Arab literature, typically Arab chroniclers would end their passages with the phrase (God curse them). They wished to rid their lands of what they felt was an occupying force. At the city of Ascalon, Usama the warrior fought against the *Franks* with his fellow Muslims. He declared “Comrades! Go back and man your walls, and leave these men to us! If we are victorious over them, then you can join us, if they are victorious over us, then you will be safe behind your city walls.” Usama was suggesting this to the infantry of Ascalon, but they did not heed his warning, and were routed by the *Franks*. According to Usama, Muslim infantry who survived the attack stated that, “Ibn Munqidh knew better than we did. He told us to ‘Go Back!’ but no, we didn’t do it, now we’ve been routed and disgraced.” This engagement against the *Franks* makes Usama appear quite knowledgeable of military conflict, and more importantly to Muslims, how to defeat the crusaders.

There will be a change in tone from the first Islamic chroniclers who encountered the Crusaders, such as Ibn al-Qalanisi and Usama Ibn Munqidh, to those chroniclers who experienced the Crusades after a century or more of

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125 Ibid., xxiii.
127 Ibid., 24.
128 Ibid., 24-25.
occupation An example is our next chronicler, Ibn Jubayr, who is the most radical and held the greatest contempt for the Fray.

The Latin kingdom was founded some eighty years before Ibn Jubayr (1145-1217) set foot in the Levant. He was born in Valencia, Spain in 1145. He was a Muslim who was introduced to Islam and the Crusades from an al-Andalus, Islamic perspective. On February 3rd, in 1183 he set out accompanied by a physician on a pilgrimage to Mecca. What he witnessed as a result of the Fray advancement and occupation into the Levant in my opinion made Ibn Jubayr an Islamic radical for the crusading period, who wished to defend the Muslim lands from these infidels.

Ibn Jubayr, writing almost a century after the beginning of the Crusades, was chronicling hostility towards westerners for initiating the Frankish invasions. Specifically, he precisely reflected the bitter attitudes towards Christians and Christian cultures harbored by thousands of refugees from Palestine and northern Syria, who had first gathered in Damascus in July of 1099 after the fall of Jerusalem. He stated,

"there is no excuse before God", he would say, "for a Muslim to remain in a city of unbelief, unless he is merely passing through. In the land of Islam he finds shelter from the discomforts and evils to which he is subjected in the countries of the Christians, as, for example, when he hears disgusting words spoken about the Prophet, particularly by the most besotted, or finds it impossible to cleanse himself properly, or has to live among pigs and so many other illicit (sic) things. Beware! Beware of entering their lands! You must seek God’s pardon and mercy for such an error. One of the horrors that strikes an inhabitant of

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Christian countries is the spectacle of Muslim prisoners tottering in irons, condemned to hard labour and treated as slaves, as well as the sight of Muslim captives bearing iron chains round their legs. Hearts break at the sight of them, but they have no use for pity.  

But unfortunately, "the sack of Jerusalem, starting point of millennial hostility between Islam and the West, aroused no immediate sensation" outside those refugee communities. Ibn Jubayr would attempt to change the uninterested attitudes among other Muslims, and rally them to counter-attack and expel the crusaders from the Levant.

In his travels, Ibn Jubayr explained that he observed "continuous farms and ordered settlements, whose inhabitants were all Muslims, living comfortably with the Franks. God protect us from such temptation." Ibn Jubayr was against Muslims and Christians cohabitating in the Levant. He witnessed Muslims surrender half their crops to the Franks at harvest, pay a poll tax of one dinar and five qirat for each person, and also pay a light tax on the fruits of Muslims' trees. The Spanish chronicler would not condone Muslims sharing the same lands with the crusaders. In my view Ibn Jubayr almost considered this an act of blasphemy against Islam.

Ibn Jubayr also spoke favorably of Muslims who had made the honorable decision to simply leave what were now Christian lands. "While they were sick at heart at having been forced to abandon their homes, they were determined never

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130 Amin Maalouf, prologue to The Crusades Through Arab Eyes (New York Schocken Books, 1984), xv-xvi
131 Amin Maalouf, prologue to The Crusades Through Arab Eyes (New York Schocken Books, 1984), xvi
to return until the occupiers had departed forever, and they resolved to awaken
the consciousness of their brothers in all the lands of Islam. Though the Franj
and Muslims did coexist in Frankish territories, Ibn Jubayr would not be satisfied
until the Levant was rid of the Christian invaders.

Considered the chief historian of the crusading period is Ibn al-Athir (1160-
1233), born in Mosul and well known to fellow Muslims for his extensive Arabic
education. "The clarity and simplicity of his style, which avoids embellishments
and aims at presenting the essential facts, has contributed to his reputation as the
chief historian of the later Crusades." Though I agree with Gabrieli's
assessment that Ibn al-Athir is one the essential historians of the Crusades, I feel
he did embellish many of his casualty figures and tone against the Franj in order
to send a signal to fellow Muslims. The message from Ibn al-Athir was that it was
time for Muslims to unite, and put an end to the occupation of the Levant by the
Crusaders.

Ibn al-Athir also documented military engagements between the Muslims
and the Franj. The earlier chronicler Ibn al-Qalanisi had written that about the
Crusaders approach to what was then Syria's largest capital city, Damascus on
October 21, 1097. Fear had held a firm grip on the city, as the inhabitants had
seen the dust from the Frankish invaders in the distance near Lake Antioch. The
Turkish emir of Antioch, Yagh-Siyan had decided to expel the Christians from the

133 Ibid, xvi
134 Ibid, xxvii-xxviii
Almost a century after the initial Frankish invasions, Ibn al-Athir wrote a description of the emir’s decision to expel the Christians from Antioch, based on testimony left by contemporaries.

Ibn al-Athir stated,

“When Yaghi Siyan, the ruler of Antioch, heard of their approach, he was not sure how the Christian people of the city would react, so he made the Muslims go outside the city on their own to dig trenches, and the next day sent the Christians out alone to continue the task. When they were ready to return home at the end of the day he refused to allow them. ‘Antioch is yours,’ he said, ‘but you will have to leave it to me until I see what happens between us and the Franks.’ ‘Who will protect our children and our wives?’ they said. ‘I shall look after them for you.’ So they resigned themselves to their fate, and lived in the Frankish camp for nine months, while the city was under siege”.

Ibn al-Athir suggests that the emir showed unparalleled wisdom, strength, courage, and judgment in this act. But the fact is, the Muslims lost the battle. I interpret this as an example of the Arabic literary concept of adab, a transformation of the facts in order to please Muslims and distract them from the actualities that happened in the Levant during the period of the Crusades. Though the crusaders did not take over all the lands of Islam, they did take key cities and hold the Levant coastline for two centuries. As a result of adab conventions, some Arab chroniclers may have not only overemphasized Islamic successes but also underplayed examples of Muslim weakness, disunity, and failure.


For example, the Muslims eventually lost Antioch when the Crusader leader Bohemond offered a bribe of money and lands to a cuirass-maker called Ruzbih, who allowed the Frankish forces to enter the fortress. But this is not the sole factor that caused the Muslims to lose Antioch. The fact is that the Muslim army was not a homogenous force, but a coalition of princes whose interests were often contradictory. Ibn al-Qalanisi had asserted that the Muslim army disintegrated, “without a stroke of a sword or lance, without the firing of a single arrow.” The city of Antioch was described by Ibn al-Qalanisi as a scene of blood and fire on June 3rd, 1098. Men, women, and children attempted to flee, but the knights slaughtered them all, and after the death of the inhabitants the Franks engaged in the plunder of Antioch. Now, no one in Syria could stop the Franks and their advancement to Jerusalem.

The question remains why Muslims were not more suspicious and contemptuous at the first invaders? In the beginning, I interpret the Muslim chroniclers to be more curious than angered. I feel the reason for this is that these were the initial encounters with the Crusaders. Some encounters with the Crusaders ended peacefully, and others in bloodshed such as in Ma’arra.

As the centuries passed however, that initial curiosity developed into anger and contempt towards the westerners. Chronicler Ibn Jubayr and his contemporaries considered their lands to be under occupation by the Crusaders, and over that century the disdain for the occupying forces grew. They were not

137 Ibid., 6.
138 Amin Malouf, The Crusades Through Arab Eyes, 36
139 Amin Maalouf, The Crusades Through Arab Eyes (New York Schocken Books, 1984), 36
This Muslim anger towards the Crusaders led them to unite under a common cause, to expel the Franks from the Levant

Later Arab sources on the conflicts of the Crusades come from Islamic chroniclers from the late thirteenth century. They are Abu al-Fida, and Abu al-Mahasin. Abu al-Fida took part in the bloody conquest of Acre in 1291, and was one of the Sultan’s vassals. He held the title of ’amir of ten’, one of the lowest ranks in the feudal hierarchy. His accounts of events are consistent with the western historian William of Tyre. What style of Arabic literature did Abu al-Fida follow?

He patterned his style of literature after Usama Ibn Munqidh, and classical poetry, which we previously discussed, called the adab form of literature. It seems that Abu al-Fida’s historical accounts are reasonably accurate, despite his general predilection for the adab form.

Abu al-Fida states that while he was engaged in battle against the Franks at Acre, that “the Franks did not close most of the gates, in fact they left them open and fought in front of them in their defence (sic)” 

Abu al-Fida wrote that Muslims killed vast numbers of people, and gathered an immense booty. Though the Sultan had promised the survivors he would grant them safe passage if they surrendered, he had the men decapitated, the women and children sold into slavery, and the city razed to the ground.

The Sultan reacted in this manner due to the Franks killing all the Muslim prisoners after the Crusaders had taken Acre from Saladin. After the Crusader

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140 F. Gabrieli, Arab Historians of the Crusades, 344.
141 F. Gabrieli, Arab Historians of the Crusades, 345.
defeat of Acre, Abu al-Fida states there was despair in the hearts of the Franks, and the result was that the Muslims easily reclaimed the remainder of the Levant coastline. Abu al-Fida was unique because he was there when the events transpired, whereas our last chronicler Abu al-Mahasin wrote of the events of Acre over a century after they occurred.

The last Islamic chronicler is the Egyptian Abu al-Mahasin (1411-1469), from the fifteenth century. Gabrieli suggests that, “his account of the siege and conquest of Acre under al-Ashraf (from a contemporary sources), when compared with that of Abu al-Fida, is the most interesting Muslim account known to us.” But in the published fragment of Ibn ‘Abd az Zahir’s biography of the Sultan al-Ashraf there is no reference to the event as Abu al-Mahasin describes it. This clouds our confidence in the accuracy of Abu al-Mahasin’s chronicle.

Abu al-Mahasin wrote a chronicle on general Egyptian history, and it was an anthology of other men’s work. This may be the reason there is such conflict between his records and other literary sources. An example of a contradiction is when Abu al-Mahasin claims that all the Egyptian forces gathered, mounted on their horses with the Sultan, and as a result the Franks fled the city. This contradicts both Abu al-Fida’s claim and William of Tyre’s claims that the Crusaders and Muslims fought viciously, and to the eventual extermination of all the men in the city. I argue due to the time that passed in history, and the

142 Ibid., 346.
143 F. Gabrieli, “The Authors and Works”, xxxvi
144 Ibid., xxxvi.
145 F. Gabrieli, Arab Historians of the Crusades, 347
knowledge that Abu al-Mahasin borrowed heavily from other chroniclers, one has to doubt the validity of his works.

Two western chroniclers that will be mentioned are Villehardouin, and Joinville. Villehardouin wrote his chronicle in the early thirteenth century, while Joinville wrote his a century later, in October 1309. Both chroniclers used memoirs, or chronicles of personal experiences, as their literary genre. Villehardouin recounts his events as a soldier of the Fourth Crusade, and Joinville writes much later in his life of the events he described as he was crusading with St. Louis, the King of France.

Frank T. Marzials translated the chronicles of both men. Marzials has no regard for Englishmen and their pen, for they do not write as the French. He speaks of the French language as a national monument, known for its superb prose writers. Marzials describes Villehardouin’s chronicle of the Fourth Crusade as being vigorous, full of sap, unforced, spontaneous, and unsophisticated. Marzials’s claims we know nothing of Villehardouin’s birth and early years, or next to nothing about him later in life and his death. He wrote nothing after 1207, and as he left his wife, daughters, and two sons to follow the cross, there was no evidence he rejoined them in his native Champagne.

Villehardouin wrote that the leader of the Fourth Crusade was Marquis Boniface de Montferrat. A pact was made between the Venetians, and the

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147 Ibid., xix-xx.
148 Ibid., xix.
149 Ibid., xx.
Crusaders initially to attack Egypt  The consensus among historians is that the reason for attacking Egypt was that it would allow the Crusaders a gateway into the Levant  But along the way their destination was diverted, and their goal became conquering their fellow Christians at Constantinople  There is speculation as to why the Crusaders shifted their attention to Constantinople  Some theories are that the pope wished to reunite eastern and western Christendom  Others say it was due to the Byzantines’ continual interference with the Crusaders, or the Byzantines assisting the Turks, and making truces with the Turks such as at Antioch during the First Crusade  These events plus others led to mistrust of the Byzantines among the Crusaders  

Villehardouin wrote of clashes between the Crusaders and the Venetians before they ever reached the city of Constantinople  Villehardouin states that, “for there began a fray, exceedingly full and fierce, between the Venetians and the Franks, and they ran to arms from all sides” ¹⁵⁰ On April 25th, 1204 the final assault begins on the Byzantine capital of Constantinople  Villehardouin claims that there were no more than 20,000 pilgrims, and over 400,000 Byzantium troops  One must question the number of soldiers prepared to repel the attack Villehardouin reported, for this number cannot be verified ¹⁵¹ The Greeks, however, were shocked at how easily the Franks and Venetians took the city Constantinople was set ablaze, and neither the Franks nor the Greeks knew who started the fire  The entire city burned for two days, and two nights, the flames...

¹⁵⁰ Villehardouin and Joinville, Chronicles of the Crusades, trans  Sir Frank Marzails (New York  Dover Publications Inc, 2007), 19
¹⁵¹ Ibid, 56
came quite close to the church of St Sophia \(^{152}\) The Crusade actually failed, since the Crusaders did not reclaim the Holy city of Jerusalem, or even make it to the Levant. The Crusaders’ leader, Marquis Boniface de Montferrat was killed in battle by an arrow in the battle against the Bulgarians, and his head was chopped off. Villehardouin showing remorse wrote, “alas! what a dolorous mishap for the Emperor Henry, and for all the Latins of the land of Roumania, to lose such a man by misadventure – one of the best barons and most liberal, and one of the best knights in the world”\(^ {153}\)

Marzails tells us that Joinville wrote his chronicle of the Crusades almost a century later than Villehardouin, in October of 1309 \(^{154}\). Joinville is recording events that occurred in his past during his crusading with St Louis. It is a chronicle written about the dedication, and devotion of a true saint in Joinville’s view \(^{155}\). Joinville spoke of St Louis’s virtues, for he was a holy man who loved God with all his heart. Joinville suggests that St Louis held high regard for worth, and uprightness. He would tell his contemporaries, “speak out, for your companions think you are speaking ill of them. If you talk at the table of the things that can give us pleasure, speak out, and if not, hold your peace”\(^ {156}\).

Joinville also speaks of times in which he saw St Louis place his body in peril of death, for he wished to spare to spare his people from pain. The first time was at the city of Damietta, while going against the advice of his councilors, he

\(^{152}\) Ibid., 44
\(^{153}\) Ibid., 114-115.
\(^{154}\) Villehardouin and Joinville, introduction to Chronicles of the Crusades, v
\(^{155}\) Villehardouin and Joinville, Chronicles of the Crusades, 117
\(^{156}\) Ibid, 122-123
went on land to accompany his knights. I compare Joinville’s chronicle of St. Louis with that of the Islamic chronicler Ibn Shaddad, who chronicled the later years of the Sultan Saladin. Both chronicles, in my opinion, are sensationalized, more interested in promoting, and recording for later historians a glorious representation of their leaders. Historians must cross-reference their sources in order to come to the most likely conclusions, and not muddled opinions on what may have occurred in the past.

The sources Marzails used for his translations of Villehardouin’s account of the Crusades were the editions of M. Natalis de Wailly, and M. Emile Bouchet. Both editions contained notes from the leading studies on the topic, and also elaborate and valuable dissertation on the Crusades. In translating Joinville, Marzails used sources such as the chronicles of Johnes of Hafod (1807), James Hutt (1868), and Ethel Wedgewood (1906). Also, Marzails relied on the work of M. Natalis de Wailly, for it was similar in form and character, and an excellent source comparable to that of Villehardouin. Marzails argues that translators should, “place his readers in a congenial atmosphere – a conventional atmosphere, if you like, but one in which, if his work has been well done, there is nothing to jar or distract – no obtrusion of the winds and zephyrs, nay, possibly the fogs and miasma, of to-day.”

Why is it necessary to provide evidence of Muslim and Christian coexistence during the Crusades, after interpreting these chroniclers’ perspectives?

157 Ibid, 118
158 Villehardouin and Joinville, introduction to Chronicles of the Crusades, xxviii
159 Ibid, xxxii
of the Crusades were? To show that I have learned that both Muslims and Christians inhabiting the Levant continuously sometimes dealt effectively with the threat of the religious and political conflict surrounding them, and that somehow both parties of each religion sometimes lived in relative peace. The rural areas of the Latin kingdom included Muslims, Franks, eastern Christians, and Armenians. The chronicler Ibn Jubayr made note of this, suggesting that, “coexistence and moderation thus triumphed. While the armies clashed in battle, the civilians lived on in peace.”

The coexistence between Islam and Christianity lasted almost two centuries in the Sham region, located in Syria, Lebanon, and biblical Palestine which was conquered by the crusaders during the First Crusade. But there were those from the West who lived outside the protection of the Crusader States, and who stayed in the Levant after the fall of Acre in 1291. These westerners, many of who had lived in the Levant for generations, were called dhimmis, and were either Christians or Jews. According to Ibn Jubayr, a dhimmi enjoyed the protection and religious tolerance of a Muslim ruler in return for paid tribute. This was also known as a poll tax, or jizya in Arabic. Muslim rulers would make dhimmis adhere to a contract, and in that contract they would admit that the Islamic state in which a dhimmi lived had legal and fiscal jurisdiction over them.

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161 Ibid, 193
Dhimmis who lived under Islamic rule paid a heavier tax burden on their sales and profits than Muslims. But as discussed previously, in return dhimmis received the protection from the state and aggressors.

David Morray writes:

“social relations between the two cultures were marked in the beginning by mutual incomprehension and hostility. Over time, however, second and succeeding generations of Franks were born (sometimes of mixed marriages) who would live all their lives in the East. Compromises began to be made in the matters of customs and personal habit, mostly by newcomers, and a modus vivendi was achieved.”

Dajani-Shakeel provides an example of coexistence between Muslims and Christians that transformed over the centuries, and proves this premise. During the early years of confrontation between the Christians and Muslims, ambassadors represented their rulers in diplomacy. After two centuries of occupation and diplomacy, treaties became more binding, elaborate, and were recorded and registered. Dajani-Shakeel continues that to understand diplomacy and treaties in the twelfth century is to understand the Islamic notion of peace. This notion of peace included the idea that even if one was in battle with their enemy, if peace was offered it must be accepted. For in the Qur’an it states, “and if they incline to peace, you also incline to it, and trust in God.”

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165 Ibid., 200.
element of diplomacy was a part of the coexistence between Muslims and Christians during the times of the Crusades.
The Crusades: Modern Muslim/Non-Muslim Relations

Modern authors on the Crusades have offered multiple viewpoints on the status of past and current Muslim/Christian Relations in the aftermath of the Crusaders' occupation of the Levant. Amin Maalouf wrote that the Crusades were counter-productive for the crusaders in that they lost the Frankish states, and that the Ottoman Turks took Constantinople in 1453. The Ottomans were so successful in acquiring past Christian territory that in 1529 they had cavalry camped outside the walls of Vienna. The Ottomans were much too close for the Christians of continental Europe, even after the Crusaders defeat and expulsion from the Levant. The Ottomans had supplanted the Mamluks who had replaced the descendants of Saladin.

I agree with Maalouf when he suggests that there had already been an Arab decline before the arrival of the Crusaders, and it had begun with the Seljuk Turks. He claims that the Arabs were content to live on their past glories, and it was their inability to build stable institutions that led to every transition of power to provoke a civil war. Many Arabs blame the Turks for their decline, and their perceived lack of modernization in comparison to the West. Maalouf suggests that the Arab world of the twentieth century still wonders who is responsible for

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167 Amin Maalouf, prologue to The Crusades Through Arab Eyes (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 261
their decline, Turks, Mongols, the plague, the West, or the Arabs themselves?\textsuperscript{168} I suggest that it was a combination of these events.

As a result, modernism became alien to most Muslims. Maalouf wrote that the Islamic world "became oversensitive, defensive, intolerant, sterile – attitudes that grew steadily worse as a world-wide evolution, a process from which the Muslim world felt excluded, continued." The Islamic world did, and to this day feels excluded from the ranks of countries in positions of power and prestige around the globe, as they were in the past.

Others such as Zachary Karabell have discussed recently how events of the past have led to a modern Islamic fundamentalist movement. The ramifications of the Crusades, colonialism, and imperialism by the West have taken their toll on the psyche of Muslims throughout the Near East. Karabell suggest that in the twentieth century the Muslim world was full of despair, apprehension, distrust, contempt, and a lack of pride. The occupying forces of the West had muted Arab nationalism, and when they left many regimes in the Near East were mere puppets of western governments.\textsuperscript{169}

Results of Arab nationalism being muted by their own leaders include the birth of Islamic fundamentalist organizations, such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Formed in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood were not only advocates of Arab nationalism and an Islamic state, but also provided humanitarian needs to their countrymen. Some of the services the Muslim

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid, 262
\textsuperscript{169} Zachary Karabell, \textit{Peace Be Upon You: The Story of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Coexistence} (New York: Published by Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 268
Brotherhood participated in were the tending of the poor and sick, and also they conveyed to Muslims a sense of belonging in an impersonal world. Hassan al-Banna claimed that it was impossible to live a Muslim life under the occupation of the British government. He made the same claims as the Arab chronicler Ibn Jubayr, when both stated that Muslims cannot live and should not live under a foreign occupation. Both shared the belief that Muslims were forced into apostasy by foreigners. Hassan al-Banna argued that in order to restore *Sha'ria* (Islamic law) an end must be put to the British government's hostile occupation of Egypt.

The Muslim Brotherhood was and is presently a broad based organization. Members consist of the poor, wealthy, and the middle class. The Muslim Brotherhood represents themselves as not strictly about violence, but for the intention of imitating the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Though the Brotherhood does bring humanitarian assistance to those Muslims in need, they do have a past history of violence in order to be heard. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood was responsible for the assassination of the President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat. Though recently in the last few decades the Brotherhood has renounced violence, no one sincerely knows their true intentions, but if you read the Muslim Brotherhood's history they are for the creation of an Islamic state in Egypt, which would follow *Sha'ria* law.

Karabell claims that there is not one single fundamentalist movement. "Muslim fundamentalist movements shared certain characteristics, but they were also deeply divided. Much like American Protestantism, Muslim fundamentalism

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170 Ibid., 268
of the twentieth century was decentralized and constantly changing shape. Clearly it is a mistake and injustice to read Islam exclusively through a fundamentalist lens. If the West continues to stereotype Muslims and the religion of Islam as a single fundamentalist movement, then such events as the creativity of Cordoba in Spain and beauty of Baghdad, the eccentric individualism of Islamic philosophers, and the piety of Sufis or Islamic modernists will be lost due to the ignorance of the West.

Historian Gustave E. von Grunebaum provides additional insight into Near East-West relations during the Crusades, and their impact on Islamic perspectives of the West. Von Grunebaum wrote on the Crusades that, “both sides are convinced that they are fulfilling a mission, both sides feel that they are fighting their enemies for their ultimate good.” This ideological and religious divide was heightened since both Christians and Muslims share the same claim, the possession of the one and only revelation. An obvious result of the Crusades was an increased awareness and intolerance of the other’s religion by both parties, as the occupation by the crusaders continued in the Levant.

Von Grunebaum suggests that, “both Christendom and Islam allowed themselves to forget that they were lauding and damning in subservience to the same values and that their love and hate was born from the same mood.” He continued, “that the East and West when contemplating each other in the

\[171\] Ibid, 269

medieval world concentrated on what set them apart. I agree with his assessments that both Christians and Muslims were more concerned about their differences in culture, than actually attempting to understand the perspective of the other. It does not matter whether we are discussing the Crusades, or the present day perspectives of those in the East and the West. What is essential in my opinion is that both Christians and Muslims attempt to comprehend the perspectives of the other. If ignorance, hate, distrust, and apprehension remain the status quo, I feel that more conflict between the Middle East and West is inevitable.

"Ignorance of the foreign civilization contributed toward the maintenance of his sense of superiority which, at least in the earlier part of the Middle Ages, was not altogether unwarranted." This refers to the Muslims sense of superiority of Christians before the Crusades. Ignorance is a dangerous trait for an individual, state, or religious identity to identify itself with, and this has contributed negatively to the ideas of Islamic perspectives of the Crusades, both past and present.

I see the basis of friction between Christians and Muslims as due to the misunderstandings of their religious beliefs. I also acknowledge that the occupation of the crusaders in the Levant, colonialism, and twentieth century imperialism did not help the West in being accepted by the Near East as equals. Von Grunebaum states,

"the main source of the Muslim's feeling of superiority, however, was the incontrovertible knowledge that his was the final religion, the one and only truth, and that, while he
was traveling the road to salvation and eternal beatitude, the unbelievers sunk in argumentative stubbornness were heedlessly hurrying down to everlasting punishment.}\(^{175}\)

**Who Were the Victors in the Crusades?**

I have come to the conclusion that as the centuries have passed, the Crusades and other western follies into the Near East have typically damaged overall relations between Christians and Muslims. This had led to the spawning of multiple Islamic fundamentalist groups, some of which use propaganda from the Crusades and other western incursions into the Near East to stir up anti-western sentiment. I see the most efficient way to combat these ideological differences as respectful discourse, including both Christian and Muslim representatives. Only when the moderates of each side come together with no agendas, will the distrust, contempt, and apprehensions between both parties subside into a mutual understanding, and tolerance.

Some historians may claim that the Muslims won the Crusades, since the Mamluk empire eventually rid the Levant of all crusaders. But this premise can be deceiving. I feel after the Crusaders were removed from the Levant, and they took with them what they had learned of value back to Europe. I maintain that as a result of the Crusaders’ contact with the Middle East, the West made advancements in medicine, science, literature, and military techniques. I suggest that this aided in the western Renaissance. As for the Middle East, after the Crusades I feel many Muslims took a step backward, and did not want to take part

\(^{175}\) Ibid., 30
in the western world. The Middle East tended to look inward for answers, instead of attempting to answer questions with the inclusion of the entire world.
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to analyze contemporary and Arabic primary sources on the Islamic perspectives on the Crusades, past and present. I suggest that there has not been enough modern Islamic scholarship written on the Crusades. Whether Arabs, Persians, Turks, or Kurds research the Islamic perspectives on the Crusades, it is relevant. What is important is that the scholarship is done in earnest as it has been in the West.

I have shown that the Crusades have been presented in the West by a predominantly Euro-centric viewpoint, and that has only added apprehension and misinformation about the Crusades themselves and the religion of Islam. It can be said as Riley-Smith suggests, “we are today subjected to religio-political hostility, erupting in acts of extreme violence, and a war of words in the course of which the Crusades featured prominently.” I overwhelmingly agree with Riley-Smith’s quotation. That is why I feel a necessity to comprehend the scholarship of today and the past, in order to completely understand and appreciate the complexities of Islamic perspectives on the Crusades.

In this study, I have pointed out and emphasized that modern scholars have wide-ranging views of Islamic perspectives on the Crusades, that Arab chroniclers recorded the invasion and occupation of the Frany, though with an increased bias and a more common use of the Arabic form of literature adab, and that in order for westerners to disregard stereotypes of Muslims during the

Crusades and the fear of Islam, they must be willing to invest time to comprehend the perspectives of Muslims on the Crusades. As author Zachary Karabell so eloquently suggests,

“In a world where technology will make it easier for the angry few to do great harm, the perpetuation of a model of conflict is dangerous. Remembering that each of the three traditions carries the seeds of peace will not itself heal the world. A more complete picture will not convert today’s jihadis from war to love, and it will not alone force the Western world to reconsider Islam. But if these stories are integrated into our sense of the past and the present, it will be more difficult to treat religion as destiny. Religion is a force coursing through the past, but hardly the only force. Muslims, Christians, and Jews are entwined, but their history is as varied as the story of the human race. If conflict is what we want to see, there is conflict. But if peace is what we are looking for, then peace is there to be found.”

Assalamu-alakum, which in Arabic means, peace be upon you. I hope this study enlightens those who wish to better comprehend the dynamics of the Crusades, and their impact on Islamic perspectives on the West.

In this study, I have made several points about the nature of western and Islamic perspectives on the Crusades. First, those westerners seem to research the Crusades more actively than Muslims, who find them less interesting. Second, that the contemporary Muslim scholarship on the Crusades is predominantly Arab-centered, and marginalizes the roles of other Islamic groups such as Kurds, Persians, and Turks. Next, that the Muslim scholars who do study the Crusades often do so with an obvious agenda due to anti-colonialism, Pan-Islamism, etc. What I consider most important is that western scholars of the

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177 Zachary Karabell, *Peace Be Upon You: The Story of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Coexistence* (New York: Published by Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 285
Crusades do not spend enough time researching Islamic sources and perspectives. As a historian, when researching any topic, in the attempt to be objective in your analysis and interpretation of the evidence, credibility is founded only when a historian researches all sources and perspectives of a topic.
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