

scholar (for example, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī) contributed to the canonization process. This minor criticism is in no way meant to detract from Brown's remarkable study and erudition. He has produced an ambitious study that will itself become a canon for the study of the canonization of the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, and so like them it is worthy of much attention and analysis.

Herbert Berg

IRIS SHAGRIR, RONNIE ELLENBLUM and JONATHAN RILEY-SMITH (eds):
In Laudem Hierosolymitani: Studies in Crusades and Medieval Culture in Honour of Benjamin Z. Kedar.

(Crusades – Subsidia 1.) xxiii, 468 pp. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. £70. ISBN 978 0 7546 6140 5.

This Festschrift is dedicated to Benjamin Z. Kedar, known outside Israel mainly on account of his contributions to the study of the Crusades. This volume honouring him contains thirty contributions grouped into three sections: The Holy Land, Archaeology and Iconography: Mentality, Law, Jews and World History; and The Crusades, The Military Orders and Commerce

The names of the contributors reflect Kedar's outstanding importance in medieval European history and most importantly the study of the Crusades. Among them are the established scholars of his generation (such as Balard, Hamilton, Mayer, Riley-Smith, Richard), but also younger scholars, many of them his students. The contributions are, as might be expected for a publication of this genre, wide-ranging, and the three headings do little to structure the material. The majority of the articles are concerned with the Crusades and the Middle East during the Crusading period. The Crusades are understood here – in line with Kedar's understanding of the term – in the traditional sense, with no contribution touching upon Crusades to other regions, such as the Baltic and al-Andalus/Spain, or upon post-1291 Crusading. A number of articles are concerned with non-Crusader subjects, such as Esther Cohen on pain terminology from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, Susan Reynolds on a further aspect of her argument on "feudalism" in Latin Europe, and Diego Olstein's reflections on the difference between world history and comparative history. The refreshing variety of source materials on which the authors draw is noteworthy: in addition to the standard textual sources, studies refer to sources such as icons, seals, archaeological evidence, inscriptions, coinage, jewellery and pulpit reliefs.

As is to be expected in a Festschrift, some articles are concerned with rather marginal topics, such as Hans Eberhard Mayer's vindication of Reinhold Röhrich. However, the majority of the articles are important contributions to ongoing debates as for example Adrian J. Boas' reflections on the development of rural settlement. Some are precursors to forthcoming monographs (such as Yvonne Friedman on symbolic behaviour between Crusaders and Franks during diplomatic contacts) or further develop an aspect of an already published study (such as Iris Shaghrir on naming patterns in the Kingdom of Jerusalem). For readers of this journal, Reuven Amitai's detailed and original examination of early Mongol administration in Syria might be singled out as an example of the excellent quality of many of the contributions. The volume suffers from some shortcomings, most importantly the absence of an index and

the poor quality of many illustrations. The latter is especially regrettable due to the visual sources referred to in some articles.

However, despite these deficiencies and the genre-specific characteristics mentioned, this volume is a valuable contribution to the field of Crusade studies.

Konrad Hirschler

MICHAEL AXWORTHY:

Empire of the Mind: A History of Iran.

xvi, 333 pp. London: Hurst & Co., 2007. £25. ISBN 978 1 85065 8711 9.

Empire of the Mind is a detailed and informative account of two-and-a-half millennia of Iranian history. Throughout the author explores the position of Iran as a non-Arab country in the Middle East, which has succeeded in maintaining its identity and language despite numerous invasions. “The remarkable resilience of the idea of Iran”, as explained in the preface, is a truly remarkable phenomenon which remains the *Leitmotiv* of this book.

Empire of the Mind is suitable for both specialists and non-specialists and its comprehensible and flowing style makes it both informative and enjoyable.

The pre-Islamic period is the focus of a small section of the book, as Axworthy is obviously more comfortable with Islamic Iran. In dealing with the early periods a few details are slightly misleading. Although Cyrus’s religion is not entirely certain, his tomb at Pasargadae is not an “anathema to later Zoroastrians” (p. 15). Classic sources inform us that the body was placed in a gold coffin and stored inside the tomb, which is made of stone. The body, therefore, did not pollute the earth, one of the sacred elements of the Zoroastrian religion. Neither is it correct to describe Zoroastrians as fire worshippers (p. 18), as only Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, is worshipped. Fire is a *yazata*- (Modern Persian *izad*-) or divine being, one of the helpers of God, and the symbol of the religion. A fire altar, and not a fire temple as described on p. 45, appears on coins of the Sasanian kings.

A comparison between Cyrus the Great and Alexander – one a liberator the other a destroyer – suggests a Helleno-centric approach to the history of the ancient Near East. This also becomes evident in Axworthy’s description of King Xerxes’ burning of Athens. It would be worth mentioning how the Athenians’ sacking and burning of Sardis and its sanctuaries in Asia Minor, which were under the protection of the Persians, prompted Xerxes to attack and burn Athens (see S. Razmjou, “Religion and burial customs”, in J. Curtis and N. Tallis (eds), *Forgotten Empire. The World of Ancient Persia*, London, 2005, p. 153). Furthermore, interpretations such as “Alexander’s aim, to bring Greek influence into Persia, Persian influence into Greece, and to create a blend of eastern and western civilisations” (p. 31) seems more a romantic fiction than political reality. Axworthy then rightly concludes that “Alexander’s pacification policies” (p. 32) – if indeed there were any – may not have influenced the Persians.

The Islamic section begins with a fascinating and detailed discussion of language and literature. Here the role of Persian literature in the revival of the Persian language after the Arab invasion is explained using correct translations by experts on the Persian language, including the author himself. The poetry of Rudaki and Ferdowsi and its significance for the revival of the Persian language and identity is discussed in great detail. This then leads to a section about the three great Persian masters: Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi, Saadi and Hafez, where the reader is carried to spheres beyond reason and into the world