CRUSADES IN MEDIEVAL AFRICA

Croisades en Afrique: Les expéditions occidentales à destination du continent africain, XIII^e–XVI^e siècles.

Edited by Benjamin Weber.

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KEY WORDS: West Africa, Mediterranean World, Atlantic World, Christianity, exploration, Western images of Africa.

This book, edited by Benjamin Weber, is the sixth volume of the 'Late Crusades' series, which is scientifically coordinated by Daniel Baloup at the Presses Universitaires du Midi. It contains thirteen contributions (three of which are in English), as well as an Introduction by the book's editor and a Conclusion by François-Xavier Fauvelle. This volume is less a synthesis of the crusades in Africa than a presentation of the many African dimensions of the Latin West's expansion from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. It takes into account not only real expeditions, their practical realisations, their genesis and consequences, and their integration into the rhetoric of the crusade, but also those expeditions that were thought or imagined. The contributions are organised in chronological order; they relate the African expeditions to the traditions of the first crusades through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Fascination with the interior of the African continent gradually increased, and the continent became a major site of confrontation with the Ottoman Empire until the exploration of the Atlantic shores opened up a reservoir of commercial resources, particularly the market for enslaved Africans.

Most of the contributions to the volume focus on West Africa; only three chapters are devoted to the eastern part of the continent. Five studies consider the Mediterranean shores of Africa, reflecting both a historiographical bias ('crusades in Africa') and the Euro-Mediterranean orientation of the contributors. Between economic motivations, dreams of religious conversion, and internal political or imperial geopolitical ambitions, the reasons for expeditions to Africa are evaluated according to the areas and periods under study. Although it was a territory largely unknown during the first centuries of the second millennium and an object of fascination (especially as far as Nubia and Ethiopia were concerned), the African continent gradually became a source for stories of exploration, albeit stories of often uncertain authenticity.

Adam Simmons's chapter highlights the importance of Crusader epic songs to understanding popular representations of oriental expeditions and to analysing the different stereotypes of characters called Nubians or Ethiopians. In his chapter, Dominique Valérian insists on the conjunction of economic and political interests and on the strategic stakes that the island of Djerba (Tunisia) represented for successive Sicilian powers between the end of the thirteenth and the end of the fourteenth century. Basing her study on Arab and Latin sources, Julie Marquer analyses a mid-fourteenth century Castilian crusade project in her study of Pierre of Castille in Africa. Urs Brachthäuser considers a French-Genoese campaign against the coastal city of Mahdia (Tunisia) in the fourteenth century and underscores that fourteenth-century sources referred to the Tunisian city of Mahdia as being situated in 'Afrique, Auffrique, Africa or Afraga'. These same

sources furthermore demonstrate the force of the knights' military honour, more so than their religious devotion, in driving the attempted conquest, even though the conversion to Christianity is supposed to have been one of the conditions of the surrender proposed to the Muslim commander of Mahdia. Brachthäuser emphasizes that the failure of the expedition's effort to conquer Mahdia lies in the dissension that arose between its Genoese and French participants. Lukasz Burkiewicz plunges us into a different type of source. This fifteenth-century account is not that of a military expedition, but rather that of the African journey of a noble stranded, or taken prisoner, on the coast between Cape Bojador and Cape White, the Senegal River estuary and Cape Verde — an account that no one can verify. It may be authentic or imaginary.

The two chapters that follow deal with Ceuta, the North African Mediterranean port. Vitor Manuel Inácio Pinto's 'The siege of Ceuta (1418–1419)' presents the military aspects of the Portuguese conquest of the city and the Maghrebi attempts to reconquer it in the following years. The chapter by Luís Filipe Oliveira shows how, in several Portuguese plans to conquer Ceuta, this province was viewed along with the kingdom of Granada and other cities in the Maghreb as a gateway to the conquest of the Holy Land. The contribution by Guillaume Linte assesses Gomes Eanes de Zurara's chronicle of the conquest of Guinea following the capture of Ceuta in 1415 and Portugal's fifteenth-century North African ventures. It narrates knowledge of the Maghribi Muslims, the search for a hypothetical African Christian kingdom, and the expansion of the Christian faith. In his chapter, Benjamin Weber wonders whether the idea of blocking the Nile to conquer Egypt, an idea that appears in several sources from the fourteenth century onwards, was part of the crusade project or a fanciful legend. He concludes that Christian Ethiopia and its imagined power played an essential role in this imaginary fifteenth-century project. Ethiopia, and its strategic location in relation to the Nile, is also at the heart of Verena Krebs' chapter on Ethiopian-Egyptian relations. She presents a letter from Pope Calixtus III to the Negus Zär'a Yaʿqob, dated 1 December 1456, which calls the Ethiopian ruler to a crusade against the Turks right after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. In the middle of the fifteenth century, the idea of a joint crusade with the Negus actually migrated from literature to the political world, as evidenced by a series of letters sent to this effect by Alfonso V of Aragon to the sovereign of Ethiopia.

The last three contributions focus on the sixteenth century. Anne Brogini's chapter evokes the brief destiny of the principality of Tripoli, once considered as a kind of Latin African state on the model of those of the Holy Land, although it was conquered by the Ottomans in 1551. Emmanuelle Pujeau describes the details of the establishment of the 1535 campaign to Tunis, known as the 'African War', for which significant funds were invested and various craft specialists were mobilised: weavers, upholsterers, poets, chroniclers, ship builders, and scientists. Pujeau analyses in particular a series of tapestries representing the various stages of the expedition and which depict the sacking of the city of Tunis. Pierre Couhault's contribution offers a broader perspective on Charles V's African expeditions from the beginning to the middle of the sixteenth century. It questions whether these campaigns can be considered crusades by considering the versified chronicle of an imperial officer, Nicaise Ladam. Fauvelle's Conclusion closes the book.

As is frequent in this type of collective work, the contributions are unequal in quality. Nevertheless, what emerges is the progressive constitution of a history, as well as multiple

traditions of expansion: Jason and the Argonauts, the conquest of Jerusalem, and the birth of exotic Africanism emerge as reference points for the African expeditions. Through these various studies, we witness the metamorphosis of Africa as viewed by Europeans. At the beginning, Africa was an unknown object. Europeans at first tried to define it using terms that integrated it into their narratives and mythologies. Then it gradually emerged as a source for new topics and new figures. The stated ambition of *Croisades en Afrique* is to consider Africa not only as a foreign object, as a source of curiosity, interest or fascination, but also as an essential element in the functioning and survival of the West. In this sense, it is a success.

PASCAL BURESI
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and
École des Hautes Études en sciences sociales

BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY LITERATURE

Fieldwork of Empire, 1840–1900: Intercultural Dynamics in the Production of British Expeditionary Literature.
By Adrian S. Wisnicki.
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KEY WORDS: East Africa, Central Africa, imperialism, exploration, travel literature, Western images of Africa.

In this volume, Adrian S. Wisnicki analyzes British expeditionary literature to produce new perspectives on African social and political history. Wisnicki focuses on the activities of British explorers in the nineteenth century and on trade and politics in East and Central Africa. Wisnicki vividly analyses explorers' reports that were generated during their fieldwork, including diaries, cartographies, and reminiscences.

The author's preamble to the book is illustrative. He writes that his book 'examines the impact of non-western cultural, political, and social forces and agencies, and the production of British expeditionary literature' (xv). In this effort, the author considers 'diverse materials', especially from what he calls the 'expeditionary archive', to study this 'specific time period' in Africa, as well as the regions through which explorers traveled and which inspired their writings (xv).

The author divides the British expeditionary literature into two kinds, namely factual and fictitious accounts. The factual accounts dominated the activities of David Livingstone, Richard Francis Burton, John Hanning Speke, Samuel White Baker, Verney Lovett Cameron, and Henry Morton Stanley. The author argues that fictional accounts, as exemplified by Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* on the Belgian colonial activities in the Congo, are useful to understanding the wider genre. Wisnicki notes that 'the intercultural strategies of analyses . . . developed for non-fiction expeditionary texts