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Review of *The World of the Crusades. An Illustrated History* by Christopher Tyerman

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**Christopher Tyerman, *The World of the Crusades. An Illustrated History*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019. 520pp. 160 illustrations + 14 maps. ISBN: 978-0300217391 (hardback). Price £25.**

Modern surveys on the Christian holy wars known as crusades are easy to find and range from numerous popular works by non-specialists through to Christopher Tyerman's own *God's War* (2006), arguably the best general study on the crusades to date, which *The World of the Crusades follows in numerous respects. However,* the scope and emphasis on the material reality of holy war, *combined* with a judicious selection of illustrations and grey-shaded, standalone inserts on particular themes, create in Tyerman's latest survey a unique, lavishly illustrated book.

Following a useful introduction, chapters range geographically from South America to the Near East, and from the Nordic countries to the Maghreb. The chapters not only rupture the Near Eastern confines of many entry-level books, they breach their chronological borders as well. Attention is paid to the eleventh-century origins of the crusades, but unusually for a survey of this nature, two whole chapters are devoted to the crusades and other forms of Christian holy war beyond the fourteenth century, including the wars against the Ottoman Turks, Protestant heretics and American pagans. The final chapter follows Tyerman's *The Debate on the Crusades* (2011) and outlines the historiography of the crusades since the end of the Middle Ages. It explores how interest in the crusades transcends historiography to find various expressions in popular culture.

General studies of this nature must always cover familiar ground and rely extensively on previous scholarship. As Tyerman indicates in his *Debate* (pp. 228-33), a Cambridge-London 'school' of scholars, consisting of the late Jonathan Riley-Smith and his pupils, dominated a major trend in the expanding field of crusade studies in Britain. Their work was frequently concerned with the crusaders' faith and the papacy's initiation and authorisation of legitimate crusades. The spiritual and judicial were central.

Tyerman was an admirable, prominent outlier in this historiographical trend, and as the present work demonstrates, he continues to tread a less familiar path in the modern historiography. Whilst his narratives offer overviews of the crusades, he seeks to place the military endeavours in their political, social and economic settings. The numerous images illustrate the materiality of the crusading past. The standalone inserts on themes such as the crusaders' baggage confirm the materialism of the crusaders.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Together, they help place the crusaders and the crusades very much in the physical and tangible realms of the crusaders' worlds.

This book is not the place to find analyses of sources and deft use of innovative methodologies. Without them, some of Tyerman's assertions come close to echoing those found in the socio-economic hypotheses on the origins of the crusades and the motivations of the crusaders, which were vigorously challenged by Riley-Smith and his pupils, and that, incidentally, can still dominate the works of popular authors. Statements that, for example, refer to the First Crusaders as "just one among many bands of intruders on the make" (p. 31) in the Near East (which finds an unfortunate echo in the video series titled *Crusades* (1995), co-written and narrated by the late Terry Jones) will confirm a popular audience's preconceptions.

It may be worth noting here that crusaders had various temporal reasons – the attainment and maintenance of honour and family tradition, a desire to augment the heroic deeds of forbears, the creation, expansion and exploitation of new and existing commercial opportunities and so on – for engaging in crusades. At the same time, the evidence does not allow a neat separation of religious from worldly matters. The ubiquitous medieval concern for the soul was no less important to contemporaries than the desire for land or various other forms of temporal gain. Spiritual matters intertwined with temporal concerns in the minds of contemporaries. A mass of evidence suggests that the processes of conquest, subjugation and extraction were considered spiritually beneficial, and that God was believed to reward spiritually meritorious acts with earthly gains.

Tyerman knows well that the "physicality of crusading did not deny its religiosity" (p. xx), although he calls attention to the possible, probable or established material realities of crusading warfare at almost every opportunity to contend that crusades were fuelled as much, if not more, by the concrete objectives of land, resources, power and reputation. Tyerman prophesied in his *Debate* (p. 234) that "materialism will probably have its day again". The present book may steer future works in this direction.

A postscript neatly sums up the importance of the crusades to medieval contemporaries. There is no doubting that different sections of society - in numerous places often far removed in space and time - felt in one way or another the presence of sundry crusading phenomena as supporters or victims of holy war. Regrettably, Tyerman frequently refers to all of this as "the crusade", with the definite article. Using "the crusade" as a synecdoche for, say, the "First Crusade" is understandable. But the whole sweep of the book's multifaceted subject matter cannot and should not be reduced to a single phenomenon, what some historians have tended – perhaps just as problematically – to call the crusade (or crusading) movement.

Nonetheless, authoritative and incisive, and spanning centuries and vast geographical distances, this beautifully illustrated book brings to life the incredible variety and richness of the crusaders' material worlds. It sets the new standard for entry-level books on the crusades.

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**Katrin Möbius & Sascha Möbius, *Prussian Army Soldiers and the Seven Years' War: The Psychology of Honour*. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2020. Viii + 228 pp. 4 illustrations. 1 Table. ISBN 978-1350081574 (hardback). Price £85.**

Recent research has transformed our understanding of the motivations of eighteenth-century common soldiers. English-language readers will be most familiar with Ilya Berkovich's book *Motivation in War* (2017), but there have also been many important works by German historians such as Jürgen Kloosterhuis, Jörg Muth, Michael Sikora, Martin Winter and Sascha Möbius. Sascha Möbius and Katrin Möbius have now provided an expanded and re-worked English version of his 2007 book *Mehr Angst vor dem Offizier als vor dem Feind?* The original German work showed that the tactics of the Prussian army during the Seven Years War (1756-63) were much more flexible than previously thought, and that they reflected the decisions of officers in particular situations and the willingness of the soldiers to follow them. It also disproved the idea that Prussian soldiers were motivated only by the threat of brutal punishments. Möbius showed that the threat of force (though rarely its actual use) did help keep Prussian soldiers in battle formation, but that the soldiers' sense of honour, their religious faith, and the encouragement given to them by their officers were much more important.

This English version retains much of the original text, but draws on new letters from Prussian common soldiers. Those who can read German and who are primarily interested in battle tactics may find the original book more approachable, but the English version draws new conclusions about the motivations of Prussian soldiers, asking, for instance, whether they were motivated by concepts of manliness and examines in detail the motivational role of music. It also presents twelve translated letters from Prussian common soldiers.