are full of earthly delights ... fountains of oil, manna of heaven, rivers of paradise, aromatic spices, precious stones and the sweetest of fruits. God seemed to have become the God of the Koran rather than the God of the Bible. And the cry was that the Christianity was in danger. Hence the Christendom called for its own martyrs. That is when nothing had been gained, as well as when all seemed lost, there was always the joy of martyrdom under the Muslim sword (p. 63).

Striking is the similarity of the grievances of the Muslims when the age of Christian victories came. Ricoldo’s above quoted sentences are not much different from the lament of Iqbal (d. 1357/1938) in his *Shikwah*, a few centuries later, when the tide of history had turned against them.

The book is a good addition to the stream of publications about the origins and roots, both political and ideological, of the Islamist movements worldwide. Primarily written for a Western audience, the work will contribute to explaining the concept of *jihād*, making clear not only what it means, but more importantly, what it does not mean or imply. The book has a wealth of knowledge. That, combined with Akbar’s lucid style make the book both illuminating and highly engaging.

Saad S. Khan


The crusades remain a very popular topic with scholars, students, the general public and, of course, politicians who are ready to apply the term crusade to any modern event that involves a confrontation between East and West. Hillenbrand’s book moves beyond the traditional scholarly view of the crusades and offers a refreshing and insightful look at the crusades from a different point of view, with the goal of providing a balanced approach to the topic (p. 3). As is to be expected, any balanced or general history is bound to leave issues, peoples or events out of the discourse. Hillenbrand confesses to doing this in regard to two important issues. It excludes the attitudes of Near Eastern Christians to the events of the crusades (p. 4). It does not discuss either...
the crusades in Spain, which the author calls “a growth industry in modern scholarship” (p. 4).

These omissions, especially the latter one, are significant. Many of the issues in crusades historiography that Hillenbrand tries to correct with her book also plague the history of the Spanish crusades. As such, many useful parallels could have been drawn between the traditional and non-traditional geographical areas of crusades.

In the prologue Hillenbrand targets the nature of the sources she used to write the book. It is obvious that she knows the sources very well. She begins by calling the reader’s attention to the fundamental problem that crusade is a western concept, alien to Islamic history. Thus, she explains that there are no Islamic sources on just the crusades. This forces historians to use “works with quite other emphases and historiographical aims” (p. 9). Historians have to piece together the puzzle of what the attacks of the “Franks” represented to the Islamic world out of “dynastic histories of the Islamic world and the chronicles of cities” (p. 9). To further complicate the problem, Hillenbrand explains that many Islamic chronicles that could provide indirect but useful information about the period of the crusades are yet to be translated from Arabic. She deplores the lack of interest of Arabists in translating these sources. In fact, Hillenbrand believes that if Medievalists, specifically scholars who study medieval Europe, who usually do not read Arabic would be able to use these sources in translation, they would develop a more balanced view of the crusades.

In the meantime, Hillenbrand develops the most productive methodology to date to correct the serious limitations that these sources present. She combines her overwhelming knowledge of the printed sources for the time period with an equally impressive array of visual materials: coins and art objects. She also makes extensive use of literary sources. She uses successfully a multidisciplinary approach to weave as complete a picture as possible of the meaning of the crusades to the Muslim world. One good example of this is her discussion of how the jihād movement against the crusaders developed.

The multidisciplinary approach and especially the abundant use of visuals make the book an excellent teaching tool. Readers, especially those not familiar with Islamic history and culture, will be able to relate better to the Islamic world through these images. The only problem is that on many occasions, the images should be better integrated with the text on the page. The extensive end notes provided at the end of each chapter of the book are very useful because they point the reader to a wealth of sources and to potential future research topics. As with the rest of the book, the end notes are a clear indication of Hillenbrand’s mastery of the subject.
The book is divided into 9 chapters. In the prologue Hillenbrand states that the book is not arranged in chronological order, but it uses a thematic approach. The first topic she discusses is the first crusade and the initial reaction of the Muslims to the Christian attack. This chapter is essential to the layout of the book. It begins with a solid examination of the few Arabic sources available for the study of the first crusade. Hillenbrand notes that the authors of these sources were not military strategists, but religious scholars who explained the Christian attack as part of a divinely inspired history. The chapter then moves into a discussion of the schism between the Sunnī Seljuks and the Shi'ī Fatimids and how the split within Islam in the region clearly worked to the advantage of the crusaders. The lack of strong leadership and unity among the Muslims are for Hillenbrand the determining factors in the success of the first crusade. The initial Muslim response to the first crusade was determined by pragmatic local interests. Thus, the Fatimids cooperated with the crusaders, the Muslims in Syria signed agreements with the crusaders, and the Assassins were used by both Muslims and Christians (pp. 46, 82 and 76). Her extensive analysis of the historical context on the Islamic side should be combined with a similar analysis of the historical context on the Christian side.

The next two chapters in the book discuss the concept of jihād and its evolution in the context of the crusades. This is one of the most beneficial parts of Hillenbrand’s study. She begins with an extensive explanation of jihād, which is bound to destroy the stereotypical views that most readers hold on the subject. Then, the author explains that to comprehend the initial Muslim response to the crusades it is necessary to understand that before the crusades started, jihād feelings in Syria-Palestine were high among the religious classes, but not among the political and military leaders. Thus, until the two sides — religious and military — joined forces against the crusaders, the Christians had the upper-hand. When did this happen? In a masterful way, Hillenbrand explains that the ruler Nūr al-Dīn Zangī (d. 569/1174), the conqueror of Edessa, represents the first union between military and ideological aspects of jihād (p. 116). This trend was mastered by Nūr al-Dīn, who became the Islamic prototype of the jihād fighter (p. 118). This contrasts with the western conventional wisdom that such honour fell to Salādīn [Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn] (d. 589/1193). Hillenbrand concludes these two chapters by explaining that the rebirth of jihād greatly influenced the failure of the crusades. By “1187 the Muslims had acquired an ideological edge over the Franks” (p. 191).

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss cross-cultural exchange and perceptions of the other. Hillenbrand concludes that the Muslims had greater curiosity for the Franks than it has been traditionally assumed (p. 257). Hillenbrand states that
historians should not interpret literally the stereotypical Muslim views of Franks that Usâmah exhibited in his memoirs; that is, Usâmah made use of these stereotypes because he knew that this was what his audience expected to hear (p. 274). This section, however, offers little additional new information about Muslim perceptions of the crusaders. As Hillenbrand points out, this is due in part to the fact that it is very difficult to find information on the subject because most Muslim writers lived outside of the crusaders states and did not have direct exposure to the crusaders (p. 358).

Chapters 7 and 8 discuss the military aspects of the crusades. Once again, Hillenbrand calls attention to the fact that western scholarship on the military component of the crusades has been very narrow in focus and mainly limited to the study of crusader castles in Syria-Palestine. She urges historians to broaden their study of military techniques and strategies beyond the construction and use of crusader castles (p. 432).

In conclusion, Hillenbrand’s book represents a major step forward for the field of crusades history. It points in the right direction. In fact, its rich content can be dissected into countless other books on such topics as jihâd, etc. One can only hope that Arabists and Medievalists are paying attention and that a new more balanced view of the crusades will develop by combining the Christian and the Islamic views of the crusades, events that continue to capture our imagination.

Isabel A. O’Connor


Television screens have recently shown Iraqi civilians, in the chaos brought on by the fall of Şâddâm Husayn’s regime, trying to maintain order on street corners or in front of public buildings. Reporters tell us that these individuals have been “sent by the local mosque”. Whatever form a future Iraq will take, it seems that the traditional religious class, or ‘ulamâ’, will have a role to play in the reconstruction of Iraq. It is this class and their history from the 19th century to the present, that is the subject of Muhammad Qasim Zaman’s