Introduction

During the First Crusade (1095–1099), a motley assortment of pilgrim armies left their homelands and loved ones to attempt a journey of over 2000 miles to distant Jerusalem. Most died along the way. The few who survived found themselves encountering places, cultures, and peoples that were often simultaneously foreign and familiar. On the one hand, they had been hearing about Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the cradle. This was the land of Christ’s birth, life, passion, resurrection, and ascension. On the other, it was wholly strange, populated by communities whose culture and outlook on life was so very different to their own. They saw crocodiles, great snakes, and lions. They ate sugar cane and dates. They learned the feel of silk. These were landscapes under non-Christian rule and the pilgrims soon found themselves: conducting diplomacy with the Fatimids of Egypt, negotiating with the Arab dynasties of Syria, and fighting wars against the Saljuq Turks. For the majority of pilgrims the sense of dislocation brought about by these events was considerable. How they coped with the transition into this new, unfamiliar, and often hostile milieu is the subject of this book. It shall explore how they drew upon the received wisdom of their former lives, their lived experiences, and the guidance they sought from eastern Christians on the road, to understand the Turkish and Arabic peoples of the Near East.

Within the odyssey that was the First Crusade, the pilgrims encountered many different societies, but the people who filled them simultaneously with the greatest dread and the deepest admiration was the Turks. The encounters that took place between these two very different peoples warrants the closest attention not least because they had so much, and yet so little, in common. Firstly, there were the crusaders. Theirs was

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1 The straight-line distance from Paris to Jerusalem is 2068 miles. L. Ní Chléirigh has recently reaffirmed that the First Crusade was understood by participants to be a ‘pilgrimage’ expedition, answering several critics on this point. See Léan Ní Chléirigh, ‘Nova Peregrinatio: The First Crusade as a pilgrimage in contemporary Latin narratives’, Writing the early Crusades: Text, transmission and memory, ed. M. Bull and D. Kempf (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014), pp. 63–74.
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formerly the static existence of agricultural communities whose elites fought small-scale noble vendettas, enjoyed jocular entertainments, and steadily accumulated spiritual and material capital from one generation to the next. Still, they were also a people in transition because suddenly, for the first time in centuries, they were taking the road in almost migratory numbers; an agricultural people on the move. Then, from the opposite direction came the Turks, only a few decades removed from the Central Asian steppe. Their horizons were radically different. The waves of nomadic Turkic tribesmen emanating from the great Asiatic grass sea broke on many shores and China, Persia, and India lay on their mental skylines. Theirs was a world of movement, of vast distances, of self-sufficiency and the battle for survival against the forces of nature. Dismissed by almost all their agricultural neighbours as barbarians, the Turks were also a people in transition. Like the crusaders they were newcomers to the Near East and, having conquered many lands, their leaders were slowly evolving from tribal chiefs into settled rulers; the tribal and the shamanistic were merging with the Islamic and the Persian. In some respects it is hard to imagine two more different peoples belligerently making ‘first contact’ during the First Crusade and yet they also had so much in common.

They were both conquerors, intent on taking and holding land. They both found themselves governing many native peoples who reacted to their rule in similar ways: some fled or died upon their swords, others attempted to manipulate them to their own ends, some even came to them for sanctuary; all had to come to terms with their new masters. The Turks and Franks also recognised much that they admired in one another. Whether landowning knights or tribal warriors, these were societies which valued their arms and mounts and both saw these similarities in each other. The more optimistic even speculated that they might somehow be related. Both were martial peoples who celebrated war and interpreted its outcome as spiritual judgement.

The convergence of these complex and disparate peoples, both of whom were midway through rapid social evolutions, is a fascinating affair. It defies reduction or easy categorization. Their interactions are as composite and varied as the thousands of individuals involved. The matter is complicated still further by the fact that the Turks and Franks encountered one another in the great arena of history: the Near East. These confrontations took place within a battered and partially subdued landscape of Byzantine, Syrian, Fatimid, and Armenian societies, which were themselves perched upon the ruins of classical empires, Old Testament kingdoms, and fallen Islamic dynasties. During the crusade, all these societies – past and present – made their influence felt, whilst no living society was left unaltered by its passing.
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This study will explore the crusaders’ relations, whether belligerent or more pacific, with the Muslim (or in some cases partially Islamified) peoples of the Near East. It will demonstrate how the pilgrims reacted and responded to the different ethnic groups they encountered and examine how they made sense of these interactions through the lens of their own prior experience and world view. Crucially, it will demonstrate how they came to rely upon eastern Christians for guidance and information upon the world of the Near East. At a macro level, there will also be discussion upon the longer-term effects of the First Crusade upon western Christendom’s broad engagement with the Islamic world.

The complexity and richness of the interactions that occurred between Christendom and Islam during the early crusading period (eleventh-twelfth centuries) is one of the great attractions of this study area. The vibrancy, brutality, and diversity of the relationships and perspectives which emerged at this time – whether on the frontiers, or within academic or mercantile circles – have led many scholars to ponder how the various Christian protagonists perceived their Muslim neighbours.

The current academic pugilists weighing into this particular ring hail from many different schools of thought with each bringing their own methodologies, insights, and assumptions to bear. All approaches have produced their distinct results and many studies have sought to describe the conceptual lenses through which medieval Christians viewed their Muslim neighbours. These differing scholarly approaches to inter-faith relations at the time of the early crusades will now be reviewed.

To begin, there are the historians of the Crusades and the medieval Mediterranean, specialising in the crusading movement and Christendom’s southern frontier. This is a large group whose publications are typically empirical and inter-disciplinary in approach. Outputs from this school of thought are generally characterised by a close examination of the textual primary sources arising from multiple cultures spliced with a readiness to incorporate findings from archaeological and art history studies. When they touch upon the question of Christendom’s relationship with Islam, in an eleventh/twelfth-century crusading context, most will stress the diversity of frontier interactions – friendly and hostile – between Christians and Muslims throughout this period, drawing attention to the many commercial, diplomatic, and social links that evolved alongside the frequent military encounters.\(^2\) The First Crusade is

\(^2\) For an excellent and recent example of a work which stresses the diversity of the connections established across the faith boundary, see Epstein’s recent study (although unlike many other authors in this field he does show some willingness to engage with post-colonial theory). See S. Epstein, *Purity lost: Transgressing boundaries in the eastern Mediterranean, 1000–1400* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006). Many crusading histories take this (or a similar) view; see, for example, C. Tyerman, *God’s war:
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generally given as a high point of inter-civilisational hostility followed by a period of accommodation as the campaign’s survivors were forced to come to terms with the business of ruling large Muslim populations in the Near East. When defining the crusaders’ perspectives, typical points of reference include the Muslim nobleman Usama ibn Munqidh and his friendship with the Templars, the Spanish pilgrim Ibn Jubayr’s remarks about the many Muslim communities living peacefully under Frankish rule, the treaties made between Franks and Muslims during the First Crusade, the First Crusade’s Jerusalem massacre (1099), and William of Tyre’s praise for the Turkish ruler Nur ad-Din. The compilation of such points normally generates a mixed picture in which religious hostility and inter-cultural interaction lie side by side. Historians raised in this school also tend to reject the idea that the First Crusade and the subsequent period of Christian settlement in the Near East (following the First Crusade) can be characterised as an all-out inter-civilisational battle for supremacy. Köhler in particular has stressed that it was pragmatism and realpolitik, rather than confessional divisions, which determined the political decisions made by Muslim and Christian leaders.

Such historians have, however, typically been cautious in engaging with hypothetical models, particularly post-colonial theory. One feature of the voluminous research produced by these academics is that whilst many studies have offered insights into the first crusaders’ attitudes towards Islam, it is only in the last few years that any full-length studies have appeared on this subject.

Another group of scholars to contribute to this discussion consists of those who research Christendom’s general relationship with the Islamic world during the medieval period, embracing all regions, contexts, and frontiers. Naturally, they are painting on a broader canvas, and the Crusades (still less the First Crusade) represent only one component in their


4 M. Köhler, Alliances and treaties between Frankish and Muslim rulers in the Middle East: Cross-cultural diplomacy in the period of the Crusades, trans. P. M. Holt, revised by K. Hirschler (Leiden: Brill, 2013), passim.

wider field. The great founders of this research area were Norman Daniel and Richard Southern, whose famous studies have become sounding-boards for later historians. Scholars in this area, following their illustrious forebears, have made a particular study of Christendom’s leading intellectuals and their engagement with non-Christians. Bede, Peter the Venerable, Joachim of Fiore, Francis of Assisi, James of Vitry, William of Tripoli, Dante, Ramon Lull, and Riccoldo of Montecroce are typical subjects of discussion. Moreover, whilst crusade historians tend to concentrate on the cut-and-thrust of frontier life, academics in this field have engaged deeply with medieval intellectual attitudes towards Islam the religion and the stereotypes surrounding the identity and person of Mohammed. A key figure in this area today is John Tolan, who has focused his attention on such subjects, particularly attitudes towards Mohammed (although he does also deal with frontier relations). For the most part, the conclusions reached by historians in this field tend to be darker than those reached by scholars of the Crusades, stressing the sustained hostility felt by medieval contemporaries towards non-Christian religions (particularly Islam). Tolan ends his major work, Saracens, pondering the notion that medieval Christianity’s claim to be the universal truth inevitably provoked its adherents to denigrate non-Christians.

Given the common interests between these schools of thought and crusades historiography, it is remarkable how little interaction there has been between them; they rarely reference each other’s works or engage with each other’s major debates. Perhaps this lack of communication is explained in part by a readiness among scholars in these fields to engage more enthusiastically with theoretical models. Edward Said’s arguments, particularly those propounded in his Orientalism (1978) have found a more receptive – although not uncritical – audience among such scholars.

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6 The classic works which laid the foundations for this field of study are R. Southern, Western views of Islam in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); N. Daniel, Islam and the West: The making of an image (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).
8 Tolan, Saracens, p. 283.
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A linked group of scholars are those who research the depictions of ‘Saracens’ contained in the *chansons* and epic verse of the Middle Ages. These *chansons* concern many aspects of medieval life, telling tales of heroic quests, courtly knights, and evil beasts. Among these tales, depictions of warfare against ‘Saracens’ appear regularly. The *Chanson de Roland* and the *Chanson d'Antioche* are the two works to receive the greatest attention with regard to the First Crusade and many studies discuss their interpretation. Key explanatory tools, commonly employed in research on these sources, are notions of alterity, in particular the use made by medieval Christian writers of hostile representations of the ‘Saracen other’ to demarcate their own identity and that of their co-religionists. In recent years there has been a lively debate on the precise nature and structure of such models of medieval alterity, which in their most basic form posit an opposition between contemporary representations of ‘white’, ‘light’, ‘handsome’ Christians fighting ‘black’, ‘dark’, ‘ugly’ Saracens, the purpose attributed by scholars to such representations being the reinforcement of Christian group identity.

A particularly sophisticated example of such debates can be seen in Akbari’s *Idols in the East* in which, in a wide-ranging discussion (covering the period 1100–1450), she breaks down the medieval discourses on Islam into their component parts, arguing that such representations were a hybrid formed from multiple strands of thought. These include the conviction that geography and climate determine the behaviour and physiology of different peoples (including ‘Saracens’); the fundamental medieval belief that Islam was an erroneous and carnal faith; respect at an intellectual level for some aspects of Islamic philosophy (drawing primarily on Roger Bacon and Dante); and, in a crusading context, the importance attached to the sanctity of Jerusalem and, by extension, the belief that any non-Christian presence was inherently a pollutant. This is her lens. She sums up this perspective describing persuasively how medieval Christians were ‘at once attracted and repelled, fascinated and transfers in dispute: Representations in Asia, Europe and the Arab world since the Middle Ages, ed. J. Feuchter (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2011), pp. 107–134. See also Blanks’s survey: D. Blanks, ‘Western views of Islam in the pre-modern period: A brief history of past approaches’, *Western views of Islam in medieval and early modern Europe*, ed. D. Blanks and M. Frassetto (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 11–53. Other studies that have influenced the theoretical approaches employed to the study of European attitudes towards Islam include: C. Bouchard, “Every valley shall be exalted”: The discourse of opposites in twelfth-century thought (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003); D. Nirenberg, *Communities of violence: Persecution of minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

For a starting point on *chansons* concerning the crusades, see Danial, *Heroes and Saracens*; Akbari, *Idols in the East*. See also Leclercq, *Portraits croisés*. 
disturbed’ by Islam and the Orient. Within this, she draws deeply upon notions of alterity, showing how such models developed over time, but making the fundamental point that ‘through defining Islam, then, medieval Christians were able to define themselves.’

Another much-debated theme within this research field concerns the identification and definition of the two dominant strands within Medieval European discourses on Islam (and their inter-relationships). Norman Daniel labelled these as ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ approaches. The ‘official’ view was that of the Church and its major writers, engaging with Islam on a spiritual level and seeking to situate Muslims within their theological world view. The ‘unofficial’ perspective was that depicted in the *chansons* and romances so beloved by knightly elites, telling tales of heroic battles, beautiful maidens, and treacherous ‘Saracen’ kings. These two narratives, which existed side by side in medieval society, adopt rather different stances in their approaches to the Muslim world and are distinct from one another in many respects, especially in their intended audiences, narrative objectives, and basic knowledge. Certainly, Norman Daniel stressed the differences dividing them. Nevertheless, in recent years, his view has been moderated somewhat by Akbari in the earlier-mentioned *Idols in the east*. She makes the point that these twin narratives may have had individual qualities and yet there were clear inter-relationships between them. In a similar vein, this study will demonstrate that clerical views informed the *chansons* while chivalric notions manifested themselves in more scholarly texts. Moreover, this work will draw upon this debate primarily in its aim to confirm that crusading texts represent – to varying degrees – syntheses of these two strands.

The final group to be considered here could perhaps be described as ‘world’ historians, or at least those concerned with the development of civilisations over the *longue durée*. These are scholars courageous enough to propound overarching theories spanning many centuries and continents, and who approach the Crusades as one component phase in a far broader trajectory. Edward Said is an example of one such writer, and whilst he actually says very little about either the Crusades or the medieval period as a whole, his major work, *Orientalism*, lays out a broad schema for understanding western attitudes towards the ‘Orient’ (and Islam in particular), stretching from the classical period through to the modern age. His basic point is that western European approaches to the ‘Orient’

12 Akbari, *Idols in the east*, p. 281 (see also p. 216) and *passim*.
14 Akbari, *Idols in the east*, pp. 201–203 and *passim*.
have been moulded by a long-standing paternalistic discourse which is inherently hegemonic and which asserts an arrogant sense of imperialist supremacy over the ‘non-European’ other.\(^\text{15}\) Given that he touches upon the Middle Ages, it is necessary for medievalists to consider the relevance of his arguments.

Having said this, engaging meaningfully with Said’s views on the medieval era is problematic. The gist of his thesis is rather blurred at times.\(^\text{16}\) In some places Said argues that Europe’s medieval (and ultimately modern) encounter with Islam was dictated in part by a deep sense of fear emanating ultimately from the rapid Islamic advances into Europe during the Early Middle Ages.\(^\text{17}\) On other occasions, however, he talks about a long-standing Western supremacist and hegemonic stance towards the ‘Orient’ propagated during the medieval period but dating back to the classical era. The union of these two impulses, both the fear of the invaded and the arrogance of the supremacist, one must conclude, cumulatively laid the foundations for a modern European perspective. This summary is problematic; at best it is a line-of-best-fit.

Said’s arguments are mercurial. Said continually describes long-standing western attitudes in imperialist terms (manifesting a confident will to dominate and codify the Islamic ‘Orient’) and he builds many modern perspectives on medieval foundations. Even so, he simultaneously provides strong grounds for viewing medieval Europe as the subaltern in this civilisational relationship in that he acknowledges that for much of the medieval period Christendom was weaker, in retreat, and driven by fear of its Islamic neighbour.\(^\text{18}\) Consequently, Said’s views surrounding the medieval period are hedged with ambiguity in that he presents Europe both as the imperialist and the subaltern. This creates a tension in his argument, which is not fully unpacked.

On these grounds, it is rather difficult to know how to approach and employ Said’s Orientalism. It has been too influential to ignore and yet the hostility with which he offers his views contorts so much of his thesis. Still, this present work is not intended as a full-length critique of his arguments.\(^\text{19}\) It would be more positive to extract from his argument that which is relevant to this present study. Some component parts of Said’s ideas, which either relate to, or encompass, the medieval period warrant


\(^{19}\) For a detailed critique, see Irwin, *For the lust of knowing*. 
closer attention. The notion that Christendom’s approaches to Islam were driven by a spirit of fear is worthy of closer inspection. Likewise, one premise that undergirds Orientalism is the fundamental conviction that Islam was important to western Europe. After all, Said characterised the ‘Orient’ (exemplified by Islam) as Europe’s ‘great complementary opposite’. The question of whether Islam occupied anything like so exalted a position within medieval European thought-worlds will be considered in full.

Another key writer to offer a model of comparable breadth is Samuel Huntington. A major line of argument in his famous Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order is that there has been a historic faultline between western Europe (and latterly America) and the Islamic world: ‘each has been the other’s Other’. The essence of his thesis is captured in the following sentence:

So long as Islam remains Islam (which it will) and the West remains the West (which is more dubious), this fundamental conflict between two great civilisations and ways of life will continue to define their relations in the future even as it has defined them for the past fourteen centuries.

In short, it is has been a sustained and existential battle for supremacy.

For him, the primary building blocks of the modern world are the relationships between civilisational units: western Christianity and the Islamic world representing two such units. Naturally, Huntington was writing predominantly about contemporary affairs, but the relevance of his theory to this work lies in his attempts to present his ‘Clash of Civilizations’ between Christianity and Islam as a permanent civilisational truth spanning back to the seventh century. Like Said, in his main work, he passed very rapidly through the crusading era but his thesis still poses important questions, perhaps most importantly: did the First Crusade create/propitiate/dilate a Clash of Civilisations between Christianity and

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20 Said, Orientalism, p. 58. This is a notion that has been contested by Irwin who wrote: ‘Islam did not feature largely in medieval European thought. It played, at best, a minor role in forming the self-image of Christendom’. Irwin, For the lust of knowing, p. 53.

21 Huntington’s main publication on this topic has been S. Huntington, The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order (London: Simon & Schuster, 1996) (quotation p. 209). This quotation seems to override Huntington’s earlier observation made on page 21 that global civilisations pre-1500 were only intermittently in contact with one another. This work is an expansion on his earlier article in Foreign Affairs: S. Huntington, ‘The clash of civilizations’, Foreign Affairs 72.3 (1993), 22–49. Bernard Lewis had already been making arguments in a similar vein, even to the point of using the term ‘Clash of Civilizations’, in his article: B. Lewis, ‘The roots of Muslim rage’, The Atlantic Monthly 266.3 (1990), 47–60 (cited by Huntington in Clash of civilizations, p. 213).

22 Huntington, Clash of civilizations, p. 212.
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Is Islam? Or is this kind of terminology unhelpful when bringing the events of this period into focus? Said’s Orientalism and Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations are among the few major ‘world history’ theories to really provoke a response from medievalists concerned with Christian/Islamic relations (even some historians of the Crusades have taken notice). Indeed, medievalists have been debating this kind of theory long before Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations hit the press. The question of whether the First Crusade and the establishment of the Latin East provoked a long-standing and vicious conflict between two diametrically opposed religious/civilisational forces, each bent on the other’s destruction, has been batted about for centuries. Notably, in 1991 (only two years before Huntington’s first article on this theme), Michael Köhler instigated a frontal assault on this same notion.

One of the dangers with characterising entire schools of thought en bloc in this way is that naturally such broad generalisations fail to recognise the individuality of specific authors. To those writers who feel corralled and misrepresented by this brusque sweep through the historiography, may I offer my apologies. Nevertheless, such an approach is necessary. The question of the crusaders’ attitudes towards – and treatment of – Muslims is one of the most sensitive and most contemporaneously contentious topics. The number of historians to pronounce their verdict is legion and it would be impossible to do justice to each. It was tempting, when writing this book, to confine research solely to works produced by historians of the Crusades. After all, they are the most tightly engaged with the First Crusade sources and their immediate contexts. Still, such an approach

23 Interestingly it is much harder to find medieval historians who support the notion of the Crusades as a ‘Clash of Civilizations’ than it is to find those who refute it. Menache described the early crusades in this way, but only in passing. S. Menache, ‘Emotions in the service of politics: Another crusading perspective on the experience of crusading (1095–1187)’, Jerusalem the golden: The origins and impact of the First Crusade, ed. S. Edgington and L. García-Guijarro, Outremer: Studies in the Crusades and the Latin East III (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), p. 235. I suspect that the refutations offered by crusades historians are not offered predominantly in response to scholarly texts which support the idea but, rather, to answer ideas currently in circulation within the modern media. Certainly when Paul Crawford rejects the notion that the Crusades instigated such a ‘clash’, he is primarily responding to conclusions reached by the modern media and politicians: P. F. Crawford, ‘The First Crusade: Unprovoked offense or overdue defense’, Seven myths of the Crusades, ed. A. J. Andrea and A. Holt (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2015), pp. 1–28. I am grateful to Professor Andrea and for being given a glimpse of the pre-publication proofs of this work. For discussion on popular cinematic representations of the Crusades, see N. Haydock and E. Risden (eds), Hollywood in the Holy Land: Essays on film depictions of the Crusades and Christian-Muslim clashes (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2009).

24 Köhler, Alliances and treaties.