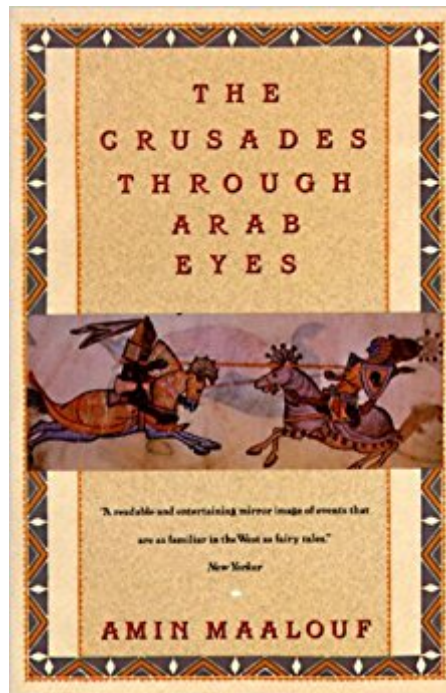




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The Crusades Through Arab Eyes (Saqi Essentials)



Synopsis

The author has combed the works of contemporary Arab chronicles of the Crusades, eyewitnesses and often participants. He retells their story and offers insights into the historical forces that shape Arab and Islamic consciousness today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Crusades Through Arab Eyes may be warmly recommended to lay-readers and students alike."
—The Times Literary Supplement (London)

Text: English, French (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

No one can get a complete understanding of the Crusades without understanding the perspective of the otherside. Mr. Maalouf writes about the story of the Crusades completely from the Muslim perspective. Usually when scholars write about the Crusades, they write from the perspective of the Crusader armies with the Muslims treated as the back drop to the story. Mr. Maalouf on the other hand does the exact opposite. He writes about the Muslim response to the Crusader invasion with the Frankish armies treated as the back drop to his story. This gives a popular era of history a complete makeover. Mr. Maalouf begins this story with the state of the Muslims on the eve of the invasion of the first Crusading army, showing the Muslims were nothing more than a bunch of petty

city states squabbling amongst each other for minor gains. When the Crusaders begin their march into Anatolia and through the Jazira, Syria and Palestine, the various Muslim rulers come into sharp focus with their reactions and feelings about the invaders. What is clear from Mr. Maalouf's writing is the Muslims were a divided lot and the Crusaders united towards a common purpose. As the story progresses, Mr. Maalouf shows the foundation on which the Muslims begin to organize themselves first intellectually then militarily to re-conquer the holy lands. Saladin is the great general who took Jerusalem but Mr. Maalouf shows that his success was built upon the work of many prior to him who called the people to Jihad against the Crusaders. Saladin was simply the climax on this long road towards Jerusalem. The story concludes with the encounter of the armies of Saladin and Richard Lion Heart, the Mongol invasion and the final expulsion of the Crusaders from the coast of Palestine. All written through the eyes of how a Muslim would have viewed these events. If you're tired of reading the same old story about the Crusades written in small variations by different authors, then *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* offers a fresh perspective from the other side.

This is the first book I read by this author, and I am deeply impressed. He writes very complicated historical facts in a simple, but not to the point where it's insulting, manner. As a westerner, I was raised to view the crusades as heroic acts. Here is a view that makes you want the crusaders to fail as you read. Chapeau!! Moving on to my next Amin Maalouf...

Amin Maalouf gets the job done in presenting how Arabs (being Muslim, Christian, Jewish) viewed the coming of the Crusades and what it meant to them. What was interesting while reading this book was how diverse this conflict was with the various factions amongst the Christian and Muslim forces. I feel that this book is a must because it shows a different side to the conflict that people tend to not consider while examining the crusades. I feel this book can be paralleled to how Arabs view today's conflicts amongst Sunni/Shia, and Arab Israeli conflicts. I feel it is critical to understand both perspectives in conflicts because it enables more understanding amongst people in volatile regions such as the middle east.

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A fascinating point of view on the Crusades, and one that's needed for balance. This could also be a person's first book on the Crusades-- it is that clear and well written. Amongst many things I learned that both sides used carrier pigeons. Fast, but with enough depth to understand many of the

complexities of diplomacy and war at that time.

Having read the Western history of the Crusades, I decided to take a view from the Muslim perspective. Both perspectives reveal that today's struggles are essentially the continuation of eleventh century conflict. Both reflect the stupidity of conflicts over religious beliefs. The Amin Maalouf book is thorough and supported by a long list of source material. My appreciation of the book, I'm sure, reflects my scant exposure to history of the Crusades. Needless to say mankind has lost too much to religious conflict. Christian destruction of Arab books was one of the worst!

This remarkable work is a scholarly work which is so well written that it achieves the author's wish to write a history of the conflict between East & West as if it were a novel. The title is a trifle misleading. The author himself points out in his last paragraphs that, by the time the last last Western sovereign had been evicted from the Orient, the leaders of the Muslim world had ceased to be Arabs. The original Arab leaders had been replaced by Kurds, Iranians (Persians), Turks and Mamluks, among others. The West became ascendant as it was evicted from the Orient, having harvested the riches of Arab civilisation and culture. Maalouf observes that Muslim culture had failed to learn valuable traits of Western civilization which would have benefited them. They commented on the legal structures of "Franj" (i.e. European) civilization, which the Muslim world lacked. Maalouf says clearly that he thinks the failure to adopt similar patterns kept the "Arab" (Muslim) world fragmented. Baghdad had been the intellectual & scientific Capitol of the civilized world. This is evidenced by the many scientific and mathematical terms of Arabic origin. Neil DeGrasse Tyson makes this point in "Cosmos," pointing out the number of astronomical terms of Arabic origin. Westerners think of the Crusades as religious wars which happened centuries ago, which we have moved beyond. The Muslim world is living in the Crusades - they consider Western campaigns in their region to be continuations of the Crusades. They refer to non-Muslim invaders as Crusaders or as "Franj." To understand present day conflicts between the West and Islam it is essential to understand the history of those conflicts which began in the 13th Century and have continued, in different ways, ever since.

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