

Kein Krieg ist heilig. Die Kreuzzüge; Hrsg.: H.-J. Kotzur; [Ausstellungskatalog Mainz, Bischöflichen Dom- und Diözesanmuseum 2004]; Mainz: Philipp von Zabern; ISBN 3-8053-3240-8; 560 pp. with 388 colour and 46 black-and-white plates; € 44,90

There is a vast amount of literature on the crusades that appears to be increasing by the day, especially now the crusading period seems to have so much in common with our own age when western armies are again penetrating the Middle East. The catalogue of the exhibition: „Kein Krieg ist heilig. Die Kreuzzüge“ even opens with the words: „Kreuzzüge gibt es noch immer“ (p. 11).

The book accompanying the exhibition consists of two parts: a series of introductory essays and a catalogue. Essays and catalogue are well-illustrated and provide the reader with an enormous amount of information on the crusades. On the whole the individual contributions are very interesting and varied. The reader is confronted not only with the persons who went on crusade, but is also given insight into what crusading meant for a man and his family, both in a physical, psychological and financial sense. Why did crusaders partake in such a dangerous undertaking? What means of transport were used? How did crusaders finance their undertaking? What did the crusades mean for the Jewish communities in Europe? What was the role of women during the crusades (did they join their men or did they stay at home)? What did crusader castles look like? What weapons were used by crusaders and Muslims? Was there a cultural exchange between Muslims and Christians? How much did people in the West know of Muslim culture? How much did Muslims know of western culture and what was their view on the crusades?

However, this having been said, it is also true that the individual essays remain individual contributions and do not seem to come together at all.

The introductory essay as well as the catalogue commence with the historical personages of Count Otto of Bobenlauben and his wife Beatrix of Courtenay, who are introduced as a crusading couple, and as the figures who will lead the reader/visitor through the crusading period and the exhibition („Beide sollen uns gewissermassen als Leitfiguren durch die Epoche – und durch die Ausstellung – begleiten“, p. 24). And so their full biographies are given, as well as those of their ancestors, and this family chronicle is set against the background of the crusades at large. Large-scale history (in black lettering) and small-scale history (in brown lettering) are thus shown to be interwoven (pp. 22–47). This would indeed have been a great ‚Leitmotiv‘, had it been followed through, but as it is the Courtenays and Bobenlaubens disappear from the scene as soon as they are introduced and are never again mentioned.

Unfortunately, a guiding principle is badly needed for whoever wants to work his or her way through the catalogue, which presents the reader with a curious hotch-potch of objects that have been placed together in no apparent order, without captions to introduce groups of objects to the reader. A miniature model of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (nr. 28), for example, is set beside some pieces of a crystal chess set (nr. 29) and these are followed by models and plaster casts of monuments in the Holy

Land (nr. 30). From a Syrian flask of gold enamel (nr. 34) the catalogue proceeds to a cap worn by Bernard of Clairvaux (nr. 35) and a letter Saladin wrote to the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (nr. 36). In the latter part of the catalogue there is excessive attention for technique in the Arab world of the crusading period. The objects described are mainly reconstructions after Arab manuscripts. In itself, these objects are interesting, but why not also present their western counterparts? There are plenty of examples of western technology in Villard de Honnecourt's *'Bauhüttenbuch'*.

Often the objects discussed in the catalogue are not shown because of their inherent qualities but to illustrate a history lesson, that sometimes has very little to do with the object itself. The skeleton of a very old horse (not dated) buried in Dirmstein (nr. 16 and illustration 103) for example is used to illustrate a short article on horses in the crusading period. The horse in question is unlikely to have ever been on a crusade and probably has nothing to do with crusading at all, and so, in fact, any old horse could have been used here. It is not the object that matters, but the narrative. This seems to me to be a very curious way of setting up an exhibition; in an exhibition objects matter and it is the objects that should tell the story.

In much the same way a reliquary chest (nr. 136), made in France at the end of the 13th century and decorated with lions and evangelist symbols, is used to introduce a page-long discussion on the history of the kingdom of Cyprus, a discussion that is sparked off by the core of the box that is made of cedar-wood from Cyprus. Because of the cedar-wood, the poor box is even made into a symbol „für das Scheitern der Kreuzzugsbewegung“ (pp. 503–504).

Usually, the introductory essays of a catalogue present the reader with an overall picture of what is to come and they make clear to the reader why the objects selected for an exhibition have been chosen. In this case the essays, like the catalogue itself, show little coherence. They can all, in one way or another, be related to the crusades, but together they give no clear idea of this phenomenon. The essays are grouped under three headings: „Krieg im Namen Gottes“, „Die Macht der Reliquien: Kreuzfahrer zwischen religiöser Motivation und Gewinnsucht“ and „Der kulturelle Austausch: Auseinandersetzung und Dialog zwischen Abendland und Morgenland“. To my mind, this leaves out one aspect of the crusades that is very crucial to the phenomenon. Reading through essays and catalogue one learns almost nothing about the men and women who settled in the Holy Land and lived there for almost two hundred years: at least seven generations. The book shows little interest in the daily life in the crusader states and evidence provided by archaeology is largely neglected. There are no essays on rural settlement (even though in recent literature over two hundred Frankish rural settlements have been surveyed in Palestine alone), on life in the cities, on pilgrimage, or on products of crusader industry. There is also little interest in crusader church building and in the Holy Sites themselves, the only two that are discussed in some detail being the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the church of the Nativity in Nazareth.

The essays quote extensively from crusader chronicles and other sources and, like these, focus on war, conquest, rape, murder and pillage. This is in keeping with

the title of the exhibition and catalogue: „Die Kreuzzüge. Kein Krieg ist heilig“. But as said before, the phenomenon crusade is more than war alone. By concentrating on the fighting in the Holy Land, the main reason why women came along is missed altogether. To my mind, most women joined their husbands, brothers and fathers in order to settle in the Holy Land, once it had been conquered, and to build up a new life here together. According to B. Hechelhammer (pp. 205–211), women either stayed at home, where they waited for their husbands or lovers to return, or they joined the crusade and were of some use on the battlefield, bringing comfort to the wounded, providing the men with water and ammunition, by fighting along and even by prostituting themselves.

This emphasis on war is probably partly to be blamed on the fact that at first there were to be two exhibitions, one entitled „Der Weg ins Heilige Land“ (to be held in Mainz), the other „Die Kreuzfahrerstaaten“ (to be held in Mannheim). This second exhibition never materialised. Due to the events of 11 September 2001 it was impossible to obtain the objects necessary for this exhibition from the National Museum in Damascus. The Mainz exhibition, however, was carried through and its scope expanded to become an exhibition on the crusades. However, in many respects ideas of „Der Weg ins Heilige Land“ are still manifest. Otto von Bobenlauben and his wife are probably relicts of the earlier concept of the exhibit as is the article on the unusual oriental-looking upper parts of the church towers of Dittelsheim, Guntersblum, Alsheim and St Peter's in Worms, which seems somewhat out of place in the greater context, as it is the only article in the entire book to tackle the impact of the crusades on architecture in the west (pp. 265–285).

This article does, however, present some interesting new facts and views. Dendro-chronological examination of the construction wood used in these towers has provided rather precise dates for their erection. The crowning element of the south tower of St Peter's in Worms is now dated 1100–1105, that of the north tower circa 1108. A similar tower top at Dittelsheim has proved more difficult to date using dendro-chronological methods: two different investigations came up with diverging dates. The top of a similar tower at Guntersblum could, however, be dated to 1102. Because of these dates and the oriental appearance of the tower tops H.-J. Kotzur relates these towers to the first crusade and remarks that most of the Germans who partook in this crusade came from the region of Mainz and Worms and that they must have erected these towers on their return in order to commemorate their victory in Jerusalem. He even suggests that masons from Worms who had joined the crusade may have been involved in their erection. In itself such hypotheses are interesting, but why not discuss the patrons of these buildings. Also, when it comes to pointing out the supposed Holy Land model of these tower tops recourse is taken to a lost model: the church of Golgotha. And to turn things round: „Somit könnten die rheinheissischen Turmaufbauten das einzige Zeugnis vom ursprünglichen Aussehen der Golgothakirche darstellen“.

All in all, the message brought across in the exhibit is as follows:

- The crusaders went to the Holy Land with the best of intentions in order to set free the Holy Sites and above all to liberate Jerusalem from the infidel.
- Crusading was an expensive and dangerous business and many of those who set out on crusade knew they were likely never to return.
- On the whole, the crusaders had no selfish motives; they were not set on gain and had no intentions of colonizing the Holy Land for their own sakes. The only reason why they did settle down here was in order to protect the Holy Sites.
- Protecting the Holy Sites was a difficult task and required the building of many fortresses. In order to keep their stand the crusaders had to fight battle after battle and in the end they lost. In 1291 Acco, the last of the crusader strongholds, fell and the story of 191 years of crusading had come to an end.

In accordance with this rather naïve view, the bearded man with a cross on his breast on a remarkable stone relief from Belval (nr. 9) is identified as a crusader, setting out to Outremer. It is even suggested that he may represent a count of Vaudémont. However, there is nothing to suggest that this is indeed a crusader, let alone a count of Vaudémont. Here is a pilgrim (hence the pilgrim's staff in his left hand), who is setting out on foot towards Jerusalem, his eyes already fixed on the long road in front of him. A crusader, intent on fighting a Holy War would surely have chosen a swifter form of transport. A crusader would also have carried arms. The only thing that may connect the sculpture to the crusades is the cross, as it suggests that the man is setting out for Jerusalem. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem had indeed become more popular now the city was in Christian hands.

As with the pilgrim of Belval, Sibylle of Anjou is presented as a ‚Kreuzfahrerin‘ (229–233)). In 1157 Sibylle joined her husband, Thierry of Alsace, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Although Thierry did partake in several of the military operations there, Sibylle seems to have come along for religious reasons alone. When her husband returned to Flanders in 1159, she decided to enter the nunnery of St Lazarus in Bethany.

To sum up, in the book there is too little distinction between crusaders and pilgrims who visited the Holy Land due to the possibilities created by the crusades. To my mind the emphasis on war and warfare is too strong; more attention was due to settlement and daily life in the Holy Land, to pilgrimage and travel. Also, in dealing with culture and technique the emphasis is too one-sidedly directed towards the achievements of the Muslim world. In spite of these shortcomings, there is still a lot to be enjoyed, as book and catalogue offer the reader an enormous wealth of information on those aspects of the crusade that are treated in detail.

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