

Comparative Analysis of the Treatment of the Success of the First Crusade in Modern Arab and Western Historiography

Authors : Oleg Sokolov

Abstract : Despite the fact that the epoch of the Crusades ended more than 700 years ago, its legacy still remains relevant both in the Middle East and in the West. There was made a comparison of the positions of the most prominent Western and Arab medievalists of XX-XXI centuries, using the example of their interpretations of the success of the First Crusade. The analyzed corpus consists of 70 works. In the modern Arab Historiography, it is often pointed out that the Seljuks' struggle against the crusaders of the First Crusade was seriously hampered by the raids of the Arab Bedouin tribes of Jazira. At the same time, it is emphasized that the Arab rulers of Northern Syria were 'pleased' with the defeats of the Turks and made peace with the Crusaders, refusing to fight them. At the same time it is usually underlined that the Fatimid aggression against the Turks led both the first and the second to defeat from the Crusaders and became one of the main reasons for the success of the First Crusade and the Muslims' loss of Jerusalem in 1099. The position of Western historians about the reasons for the success of the First Crusade differs significantly. First of all, in the Western Historiography, it is noted that the deaths of the Fatimid and Abbasid Caliphs and the Seljuk Sultan between 1092 and 1094 years created political vacuum just before the crusaders appeared in the Middle East political arena. In 1097-1099, when the Crusaders advanced through Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine to Jerusalem, there was an active internecine struggle between the parts of the Seljuq state that had broken up by that time, and the crusaders were not perceived as a general threat of all Muslims of this region at that time. It is also pointed out that the main goals of the Crusaders - Antioch, Edessa, and Jerusalem - were at that time periphery since the main struggle for power in the Middle East was at this time in Iran. Thus, Arab historians see the lack of support from Arabs of Syria and Jazira and the aggression from Egypt as a crucial factors preventing the Seljuks from defeating the Crusaders, while their Western counterparts consider the internal power struggle between the Seljuks as a more important reason for the success of the First Crusade. The reason for this divergence in the treatment of the events of the First Crusade is probably the prevailing in much of Arab historiography, the idea of the Franks as an enemy of all peoples and religions of the Middle East. At the same time, in contemporary Western Historiography, the crusaders are described only as one of the many military and political forces that operated in this region at the end of the eleventh century.

Keywords : Arabs, Crusades, historiography, Turks

Conference Title : ICAIS 2018 : International Conference on Arabic and Islamic Studies

Conference Location : Lisbon, Portugal

Conference Dates : April 16-17, 2018