



Letters from the East: Crusaders, Pilgrims and Settlers in the 12th-13th Centuries (Crusade Texts in Translation)

Keith Bate

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No written source is entirely without literary artifice, but the letters sent from Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine in the high middle ages come closest to recording the real feelings of those who lived in and visited the crusader states. They are not, of course, reflective pieces, but they do convey the immediacy of circumstances which were frequently dramatic and often life-threatening. Those settled in the East faced crises all the time, while crusaders and pilgrims knew they were experiencing defining moments in their lives. There are accounts of all the great events from the triumph of the capture of Jerusalem in 1099 to the disasters of Hattin in 1187 and the loss of Acre in 1291. These had an impact on the lives of all Latin Christians, but at the same time individuals felt impelled to describe both their own personal achievements and disappointments and the wonders and horrors of what they had seen. Moreover, the representatives of the military and monastic orders used letters as a means of maintaining contact with the western houses, providing information about the working of religious orders not found elsewhere. Some of the letters translated here are famous, others hardly known, but all offer unique insight into the minds of those who took part in the crusading movement.

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