



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Last Chapter of William of Tyre's Chronicle, As A Source of Crusader Self- Criticism

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Received: Sep 3, 2024

Accepted: Nov 16, 2024

Keywords

Crusades

William of Tyre

Historia rerum

Saladin

ABSTRACT

This paper does spotlights on the Last chapter of "historia rerum in pertibus Transmarinis gestarum" by William of Tyre, the official historian of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem (1099-1187). William of Tyre was objective historian, he praised leaders of the moslems, at the same time, he criticized bad conditions of the crusades in particular after reign of Amalric I (1163-1174), and thus we can consider his writings very important in field of self-criticism. In his last chapter, William was farsighted, he expected the decline and fall of the crusades Kingdom.

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INTRODUCTION

Several research studied history of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem through political, and economic sides, but few of them made spotlights on self-criticism of the crusaders although special importance of that side to form objective vision towards that vital epoch in relations between east and west in the middle ages.

This paper does spotlight on the last chapter of William of Tyre's (Davis, 2017:64-75). (Vessey, 1973:433-455). (Rowe, 1988). (Folda, 1993: 1250-1300). (Awad ,2015: 512-516). Chronicle , as a source of Crusader self-criticism , during the twelfth century in particular.

DISCUSSION**William of Tyre and his Chronicle :**

First of all , we can consider William of Tyre as the official historian of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem. King Amalric I (1163 – 1174) , (Zakar, 1990: 300-395). (Runciman, 1982:153-158). (Abd el-Moneim, 2014). asked him to write a History of the Franks in the Levant , or Eastern parts of the Mediterranean. He provided him with large amounts of documents to prepare this royal task .

William was a talented one , a multilingual , and a far sighted . He spent 20 years in Western Europe, in particular France and Italy , studying different disciplines , such as ancient Greco – Roman Literature and law .

This happened during the Renaissance of the Twelfth century, which considered a most important one in the medieval history of Europe, because Europeans translated several Arabic works and epistles into Latin language, in different fields of human knowledge. So, we can consider William of Tyre a result of culturalization between East and West during that epoch. In particular he was perfect in Arabic language and could read several Arab historical writings.

William's Chronicle was entitled in Latin: "Historia rerum in partibus transmarianis gestarum" (Tyrannus, 1844). or in English: "A History of deeds done beyond the sea" (Babcock, Krey, 1943). In fact, we can realize a lot of information about the Crusaders and their conflict with the Muslims in the East through that unique crusader Chronicle.

The last chapter of "Historia rerum"

The last chapter of "Historia rerum" (Zakar, 1990: 1072 – 1076) is a very important source among the other ones of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem (Praver, 2001). because William was the official and eyewitness for several historical events for more than twenty years. Therefore, this historian offers his viewpoints towards conditions of the crusaders in the East during the reigns of Amalric I, Baldwin IV (1174 – 1183) (Babcock, Krey, 1943: 399-553), (Hamilton, 2000), (Mahmoud, 2019), and Baldwin V (1183 – 1185) (Murray, V.1, 2006: 139).

We can notice that Amalric I was the last strongest Crusader king, he aimed at extending borders of the Latin Kingdom of the Crusaders towards Egypt to get out of the Levant, but he failed. Hence, we can say that the Crusaders succeeded in the Front of Asia, but they failed in Africa because Egypt was always a grave of her invaders with the support of Syria.

Besides, Amalric I did his best to develop laws of the Franks, so we cannot study crusaders institutions (Praver, 1980). in the east without the achievements of that ambitious king.

William of Tyre was contemporary to this flourishing epoch in history of Latin east, although its failure in the south.

On the other hand, Saladin (1171 – 1193) (Lane Pool, 2007). (Awad, 2008). (Lev, 1999) (Jubb, 2000). (Diane, 2002). in the year 1171 A.D. could collapse the Fatimid caliphate which lasted more than two centuries in Egypt after so long journey of decline and fall as a result of several internal and external factors. we do not need to mention more details about that point. This decisive event was very important, it was exactly like a big earthquake shocked the Near East because, then, political conflict between Abbasid Caliphate. at Baghdad and Fatimid Caliphate at Cairo was finished for ever, and Egypt will actively participate in Islamic Jihad against the western invaders after a long period of its absence.

In the year 1174, both Nur ad-Din Mahmoud (Elisseef, 1967), (Awad, 1998), (Awad, 2021) who is considered the real organizer of Islamic front against the crusaders in the second half of the twelfth century and Amalric I died. So, another epoch was started.

Saladin quickly directed to Syria to annex Damascus to Cairo to make a united Islamic front against the crusaders. That was a great achievement, as he could finish a troubled period of political disorder. He defeated Zangids of Syria in 1174, as well as of north Iraq. In 1183, both Aleppo, in north of Syria, and Mosul, in north of Iraq, became under his political dominance, and the Abbasid caliphate supported him as well.

Thanks to valleys of the rivers of Nile, Orontes and Euphrates, Saladin could form a strong and a well-equipped army (Smail, 1956). (Oman, 1953). (Gibb, 1951: 304-320). (Hussain, 1986). he could have excellent groups of spies to provide him with vital information of the crusaders. Thanks to this, he could realize inferiority and weakness points of the Crusaders. And day after day, he became the

superior Muslim leader in both Syria and Egypt , and extended his state from northern Iraq to Nubia in south of Egypt .

As for William of Tyre he noticed the two ages of strength and weakness of the crusaders. He was an objective historian, he praised Saladin, describing him as a brave in battlefield, a very generous and a great sultan (Zakar,1990: 1057). On the contrary, he criticised his Christian nation.

After death of Amalric I , the kingdom of Jerusalem suffered a period of instability . William noticed clearly “ a gab of generations “(Zakar,1990: 979), (Awad, 2021), among crusaders in the east . He sadly asked himself : why the early crusader generation despite of their limited numbers could achieve a great achievement for the sake of kingdom against the Muslims , but in his time the crusader generation has weaken , indulged in sins and far from God path (Zakar,1990: 979). .

We can consider the last chapter of “ Historia rerum “ a true mirror reflecting the bad conditions of the crusaders in the east through viewpoint of the official historian of the crusading kingdom of Jerusalem .

He wrote : “ Now , I would like to give up writing history of the Franks after several disasters has happened . The crusaders lost their good fame , and I could not find anything to talk about , except disasters of a suffering country (Zakar,1990: 1072)

Actually, William of tyre was filled with sorrow because in the past , the crusaders' brave men for more than 80 years could seize strength perfectly , particularly in Jerusalem , core of the kingdom (Zakar,1990: 1072) But in his time, the crusaders lost bravery, and their enemy, under the leadership of Saladin , became stronger . William, as a churchman , thought that sins of the crusaders were the main reason for such a punishment of God (Zakar,1990: 1073), but in fact , there were different political factors behind that.

He mentioned that the past crusaders used to gain victory in several battles , but now they suffered more military defeats and setbacks .

As a result of those bad conditions of the crusaders, William in his last chapter was suffering of depression , which is a bad psychological disorder , as a result of deep sadness (Zakar,1990: 1072) ,(Styron, 1990). (Teasdale, Williams, Segal ,2013). Besides, he could not achieve his life dream by being a patriarch of Jerusalem Church, but his opponent, Eraclius (Babcock, Krey, 1943: 412, 436, 451). (Kedar, 1982: 177-204). (Awad, 2015: 560-562). (Mekheimer , 2012), had won that high ecclesiastical position . William of tyre mentioned that Eraclius was a handsome man, and the mother of the king admired of him although he could neither read nor write, so he was disqualified to be a patriarch.

William accused him because his immortal sexual relationship with daughter of a rich merchant in Nablus, so, in the viewpoint of this historian , Eraclius was a womanizer (Babcock, Krey, 1943: 686).

On other hand, professor Benjamin Z. Kedar refused that inimical image of William , he mentioned that Eraclius was a qualified person and made several deeds for the sake of the Kingdom (Kedar, 1982: 177-204)

We can notice that in the supplement of “ Historia rerum “ ,written by an unknown historian , that patriarch Eraclius assassinated William by poison (Habashi, 2002: 82). (Davis, 2018). (Shyder, 2008). when the late was travelling to Rome to meet the pope to complain his rival . In this crusader source we find details about that conspiracy and the writer was sympathized with William. This offers us a true vision about how bad the conditions of the kingdom were , and how the banner of “ Pax Dei “ turned to be a false motto . And because Eraclius and William part of the ecclesiastical Elite of the crusaders , we cannot agree with professor Benjamin Kedar's vision . William in his last chapter mentioned details of internal conflict between Guy de Lusignan king of Jerusalem and count of Jaffa

(Zakar, 1990: 1074-1076) (Smail,1982: 159-175) . So, we can easily notice that the crusader king became weaken and the counts became very strong.

For sure , self – criticism of the crusaders reached to advanced stage by historian of “ *Historia rerum* “ , he indicated to fatal mistakes of the Crusaders and blamed the Templars and politicians of his time. This occurred before the decisive battle of Hattin (Aybash, 2009), (Kedar, 1992). (Nicole, 1993), in 4th of July 1187 A.D. , where Saladin could lead his army to destroy the biggest Crusader army near Tebrias . As a result of Hattin, Saladin could restore Jerusalem from Crusader occupation after 88 years.

In the last chapter of “ *Historia rerum* “ , we notice that William of Tyre , by his active historical criticism warned the crusaders , and he was farsighted by expecting decline and fall of Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem , he mentioned that Saladin will lead Muslims to such achievement . Thus, we can consider him “ a pre-disaster historian “ . He advised his nation without any positive response , and after just one year of his departure, the Crusaders paid very grossly the price at Hattin .

CONCLUSION

we can reach to some important results as follows :

1. The last chapter of “ *Historia rerum* “ is very important as a source of history of Latin kingdom of Jerusalem , in particular directly before disasters of Hattin in 4th of July of the year 1187 .
2. William of tyre could make deep criticism towards bad conditions of the Crusaders in specially after the death of Amalric I in the year 1174 .
3. In general , William was an objective crusader historian , he praised Nur ad –Din Mahmoud (1146 -1174) and Saladin (1171-1193) , as well he criticised his contemporary Crusaders and considered them responsible for what happened negatively to the Latin kingdom .
4. Objectively , we cannot find any crusader historian dealt with “ generations’ gab of the crusaders “ except William , so , he occupies a vital rank among contemporary crusaders’ historians. Thus, we can consider the last chapter of *historia rerum* is very important among contemporary sources of history of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem because of critical vision of William of tyre as unique medieval historian.

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