

## THE ALEXANDRIAN CRUSADE (1365) AND THE MAMLŪK SOURCES

REASSESSMENT OF THE *KITĀB AL-ILMĀM* OF AN-NUWAYRĪ AL-ISKANDARĀNĪ  
(D. A.D. 1372)

JO VAN STEENBERGEN\*

The crusade that Peter I of Lusignan, King of Cyprus and Jerusalem from 1358 until 1369,<sup>1</sup> embarked upon in October 1365 has already aroused a considerable number of scholarly controversies. In recent times, the works of Azīz S. Atiya<sup>2</sup> and Peter W. Edbury<sup>3</sup> in particular were very notable in this respect. Nevertheless, several issues still remain open for research and consideration — or reconsideration —, particularly concerning the Muslim historiography on the event. One of these issues, I believe, is that of the appreciation of the most elaborate Muslim reproduction in the encyclopaedia of the eyewitness an-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarānī of the conquest and sack of Alexandria in 1365. This description of the last convulsions of the Crusades in Egypt was regarded by such an authority as A.S. Atiya as “the most valuable source material on the Crusade of Alexandria from the Egyptian point of view”.<sup>4</sup> It is the intention of this paper to show that this is a dangerous assumption and that, though an-Nuwayrī’s contribution is indeed very valuable, it still requires a very critical approach.

King Peter I prepared his crusade against the Mamlūks of Egypt very thoroughly, travelling around in Europe from 1362 until 1365 and seeking financial and practical support at the illustrious European courts of his time.<sup>5</sup> He finally gathered with his allies at the island of Rhodes in August 1365<sup>6</sup> and the entire fleet set sail on the 4th of October. Only

\* For the abbreviations used in the footnotes see the end of this article.

<sup>1</sup> See H.D. Purcell, *Cyprus* (New York and Washington, 1969), p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> A.S. Atiya, “The Crusade in the Fourteenth Century”, in *A History of the Crusades*, ed. K.M. Setton, III, *The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. H.W. Hazard (Madison, Wisc., 1975), pp. 3-26.

<sup>3</sup> Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*; *idem*, “Crusading Policy”, pp. 90-105.

<sup>4</sup> Atiya, *A Fourteenth Century Encyclopedist*, pp. 18, 38.

<sup>5</sup> Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*, p. 161; *idem*, “Crusading Policy”, pp. 92-3; Atiya, “Crusade” (see n. 2), pp. 14-5.

<sup>6</sup> Edbury, *Kingdom of Cyprus*, p. 166.