

# Muslims and Mongols

ESSAYS ON MEDIEVAL ASIA BY

J. J. Saunders



EDITED BY G. W. RICE

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# Preface



THE PUBLICATION of this small selection of essays by the late J. J. Saunders on the quinquennium of his death is intended as the memorial tribute of the University of Canterbury to one of its most prolific and distinguished scholars of recent years. Rising costs have resulted in a much smaller selection than that originally envisaged, but the essays chosen have a unity of theme and subject which should give the volume lasting interest for students of medieval Asia. The biographical sketch which precedes the essays is based largely on John Saunders's remarkable 'Journal of My Reading', which he maintained faithfully for nearly forty years. This furnished an abundance of material, almost the beginnings of a full-length biography, of which only the barest outline could be presented here.

Thanks must therefore be given first and foremost to his widow, Mrs Eileen Saunders, for making the journal available, and also for consenting to deposit it along with other unpublished material in the archives of the University of Canterbury Library. While trusting that she may find this modest volume a fitting tribute to her husband's memory, the editor and his colleagues in the History Department at Canterbury regret the long delay in its appearance.

Acknowledgement must also be made of the permissions kindly given by copyright holders for the reprinting of articles which first appeared in their journals:

- 'The Nomad as Empire Builder', *Diogenes, An International Review of Philosophy and Humanistic Studies*, 52 (1965), 79-103; Editor Roger Callois, Casalini Libri, 4 via Leopardi, Firenze, Italy.
- 'The Decline and Fall of Christianity in Medieval Asia', *Journal of Religious History*, 5 (1968-9), 93-104; Sydney University Press, N.S.W., Australia.
- 'The Problem of Islamic Decadence', *Journal of World History*, 6 (1963), 701-20; Éditions de la Baconnière, S.A., 2017-Boudry, Switzerland.
- 'The Purpose of History' was the inaugural lecture of a history teachers' refresher course held at Rangiora in January 1966, and is here published for the first time.
- 'The Mongol Defeat at Ain Jalut' was presented at the XXVIIth International Congress of Orientalists held at Ann Arbor, Michigan, in August 1967.

Several other obligations have been incurred in the preparation of this volume. The editor wishes in particular to thank Dr Bernard Hamilton of Nottingham University for his assistance in making the final selection, Mr P. R. May and Professor W. D. McIntyre for their careful scrutiny of the biographical sketch, and Professor G. W. O. Woodward for his advice and encouragement. Any errors which have survived must remain the responsibility of the editor. Finally, the volume owes its existence to the Publications Committee of the University of Canterbury who so readily supported this tribute to the author of one of their most successful earlier ventures.

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J. J. SAUNDERS  
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JOHN SAUNDERS taught in the History Department of the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, from 1949 until his death in 1972. He was a prolific writer and broadcaster and generations of graduates remember him for his wide-ranging understanding of man's past. His *Aspects of the Crusades* (1962) and *History of Medieval Islam* (1965) were acclaimed as lucid and expert summaries of current research, the latter described as 'one of the two best short introductions to medieval Islam'.

These essays, reprinted as a memorial tribute by his colleagues and former students, will prove valuable to all who are interested in medieval Asia, especially in the Mongol era. They form a useful supplement to Saunders's *History of the Mongol Conquests* (1972). For those who knew him only by his published work, the biographical note and hitherto unpublished paper on 'The Purpose of History' will give an insight into his philosophy as a historian, and into the interests which shaped his early career.

*Cover illustration:* A Mongol warrior, re-drawn by Gillian Jones from the Edinburgh manuscript of Rashid al-Din's *World History*.