

R. Ilson

THE LEXICOGRAPHY OF CONCEPTS: THE CRUSADES

*University College London,
WC1E6BT, Gower Street, London, United Kingdom*

A comparison of the treatment of a culturally significant concept, the Crusades, in dictionaries of several languages, in the hope of learning about dictionaries and the dictionary cultures that produce and use them – and in order to encourage colleagues to undertake such comparisons.

Key words: the Crusades; concept; lexicography.

Introduction:

In an earlier essay, “The Lexicography of Concepts in English, French, and Russian”, I discussed the treatment of various concepts (black/white, dog/cat) in dictionaries of English and Russian – and then climaxed with the treatment in dictionaries of English, French, and Russian of the (Protestant) *Reformation*, *La Réforme*, *реформация*. It seemed (to simplify somewhat) that the English dictionary, the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*¹, reflected the point of view of a Protestant culture, the French dictionary, *Le Petit Robert*² that of a Catholic culture, and the Russian dictionary, *Ожегов Толковый словарь русского языка*³ that of an Orthodox culture influenced perhaps by historical materialism. Is that surprising? Only if one believes (as I sort of did) that dictionary definitions represent some kind of transcendent culturally independent truth.

I propose now to investigate in the same way another important but controversial item: the *Crusades*. In doing so I shall use the same dictionaries as before, but add to them (for reasons that will become apparent) two dictionaries of Spanish: *Diccionario Manual e Ilustrado de la Lengua Española*⁴ (*Real Academia Española*) and *Diccionario del Español Usual en México*⁵.

Without further ado, let me proceed to the evidence:

Robert Ilson – Honorary Research Fellow of University College London, UK, Honorary Member of the European Association for Lexicography (e-mail: robert.ilson@outlook.com).

¹ COD, 12th edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011.

² PR, Dictionnaires Le Robert, Paris, 1988.

³ О, Мир и Образование, Москва, 2014.

⁴ RAE, Espasa-Calpe, S.A., Madrid, 1927.

⁵ DEU, El Colegio de México, México D.F., Primera Edición, 1996.

Evidence:

COD: crusade *n*: any of a series of medieval military expeditions made by Europeans to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims.

PR: croisade *n*: *Hist.* Expédition entreprise par les chrétiens coalisés pour délivrer les Lieux saints qu'occupaient les musulmans. "Expedition undertaken by a coalition of the Christians to liberate the Holy Places occupied by the Muslims."

RAE: cruzada *n*: Expedición militar contra los infieles que publicaba el sumo pontifice, concediendo indulgencias a los que a ella concurriesen. "Military expedition against the infidels proclaimed by the Supreme Pontiff, who granted indulgences to those who took part in it."

DEU: cruzada *n*: Cada una de las expediciones de los cristianos durante la Edad Media, con las que buscaban liberar a Palestina de los musulmanes. "Each of the expeditions of the Christians during the Middle Ages, whereby they sought to liberate Palestine from the Muslims."

O: Крестовые походы *n*: походы западноевропейских рыцарей на Восток в XI- XIII вв. [Note that O's entry is in the plural.]

Four call the Crusades "expeditions"; and O calls them "походы", which my Russian-English dictionaries suggest can be either 'expeditions' or 'campaigns'.

What sort of expeditions were they ? Military (COD, RAE), Unspecified (PR, DEU, O)

Who undertook these "expeditions" ? Europeans (COD), Christians (PR, DEU), Knights (O), Unspecified (RAE)

To what end ? To recover the Holy Land (COD), to liberate the Holy Places (PR), to liberate Palestine (DEU), to the East (O), Unspecified (RAE)

Against what enemy ? Muslims (COD, PR, DEU), Infidels (RAE), Unspecified (O)

When ? Medieval (COD), *Hist.* (PR), Middle Ages (DEU), Eleventh-Thirteenth Centuries (O), Unspecified (RAE)

Extra Information: Pope's Role, Indulgences (RAE), West European Knights (O, which makes a similar useful distinction in its treatment of the (Protestant) Reformation)

Commentary:

One is of course struck by the difference between the two Spanish dictionaries, separated by 69 years and the Atlantic. The goal has changed to liberating Palestine from beating infidels in order to gain indulgences. Nor is there any mention in either book of the Holy Land or the Holy Places. Although DEU is PC as RAE is not, RAE might represent more accurately how the Crusades were perceived by those who actually took part in them. By the way, although I'm not sure whether "Holy Places" (self-explanatory ?) needs a dictionary entry of its own, I believe strong-

ly that “Holy Land” does, even (or especially) in a dictionary that does not enter place-names. COD’s 12th edition uses “Holy Land” in its definition of *crusade* but does not grant it own-place entry. Struck by this omission, I looked elsewhere – and found it entered in COD’s Ninth Edition of 1995: “W. Palestine, esp. Judaea.” Another phrase that hovered in my mind whilst writing this essay was “holy war”, an equivalent in some respects of the Arabic “jihad”. Surely a crusade (in its historical sense) is a prime example of one (though if it is to liberate Palestine rather than the Holy Land it may be more political than religious)? To pursue this line of inquiry I endeavoured to find “holy war” in my corpus of five dictionaries. COD has it: “a war waged in support of a religious cause”. PR has *guerre sainte* (under *guerre*): “guerre que mènent les fidèles d’une religion au nom de leur foi” (**V. Croisade**). (PR distinguishes this from “guerre de religion”, as between Catholics and Protestants.) But the equivalent of “holy war” seems not to be in RAE, DEU, or O. Place names are problematic for dictionaries: though O enters *Восток* and *Запад*, it leaves unspecified the boundaries of *Восток* and *Западноевропейский*. Another lacuna is *Edad Media*, entered in neither Spanish dictionary, though *Middle Ages* is in COD, *Moyen Age* is in PR, and both *средневековье* (main entry) and *средне века* (sub-entry at *средний*) are in O. O’s “XI- XIII вв.” circumvents the problem by limiting itself to the dates of the Crusades themselves rather than situating them within a particular epoch of European history.

Conclusion.

It is with considerable trepidation that I conclude my survey with an effort to construct a definition of *crusade* compatible with all those presented above. It may if successful end this discussion; if even more successful, it will prompt still more discussion:

crusade n. any of a series of Holy Wars of the 11th to 13th centuries fought with papal approval by Western European Christians led by noblemen to take back from Muslims control of the Holy Land and its Christian holy places.

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Р. Илсон

ЛЕКСИКОГРАФИЯ ПОНЯТИЙ: КРЕСТОВЫЕ ПОХОДЫ

*Университетский Колледж Лондона,
WCEBVT, Великобритания, Лондон, Gower Street*

В статье проводится сравнение трактовки культурно значимого понятия – крестовых походов – в словарях нескольких языков с целью на основе словарных данных рассмотреть отображение в них культуры, а также для того, чтобы вдохновить коллег провести подобные сравнения.

Ключевые слова: Крестовые походы; понятие; лексикография.

Сведения об авторе: *Роберт Илсон* – профессор, почетный научный сотрудник Университетского колледжа Лондона, Лондон, Великобритания, почетный член Европейской ассоциации лексикографии (e-mail: robert.ilson@outlook.com).

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