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## BOOK REVIEWS

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**JOHN D. HOSLER**

**Jerusalem Falls: Seven Centuries  
of War and Peace**

New Haven—London: Yale University  
Press, 2022

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**W**HOSOEVER HAS not visited Jerusalem at least once—or has otherwise read about the holy city in the Bible, in history or theology books? It is likely that most of those who read this review have done both. The remainder, in the minority, were presumably informed in some measure about the holy city through digital media, especially since Jerusalem hits the headlines every year on Easter or whenever interreligious clashes occur in Israel.

Viewed through the convoluted theological and religious history of the world, Jerusalem is Yahweh's promise to the chosen people, as well as the locus of manifestation of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Taken as a religious identity landmark in the works of Christian writers and Church Fathers through its sacred biblical geography, this paradigmatic city became the center of the world, metaphorically linked to Adam's paradise and to the heavenly eternal city, the place where the righteous will enjoy life after death.

This city full of history is the focus of Hosler's book; however, the interpretation I offered above is not what Hosler wants to convey to the reader. As the book's title seemingly suggests, the author's primary interest lies not in engag-

ing with the phenomenology of a sacred Jerusalem and its entangled theological history (even though, in the introduction, he does not eschew from making the reader familiar with the cultural appurtenance and spiritual heritage of the city for all three Abrahamic religions, pp. 1–10). Rather, he notably intends to illustrate a well-told story about the socio-military memoirs of this city. Hosler's monograph emphasizes the transformations brought about by military phases within the history of the holy city. It epitomizes how Jerusalem was the scene of military confrontations, explicitly so from the time of Islam's emergence to the period of the crusades (7<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century). This is not a book illuminating Jerusalem in every aspect of medieval life and power, but, as the author states: "it is a book about conquest: those 'falls,' or moments from the seventh through the thirteenth century when possession of the city passed from adherents of one religious confession to another by way of conflict," and especially, "the story of concord and resolution" (p. 3).

The narrative is divided into 5 chapters. The book also contains 17 illustrations and 7 useful maps, portraying the area of the city under the various local powers, from the time of early Islam to the period of the Third Crusade. As the author confesses, underpinning the book were some of the courses in military history he taught at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, especially "Deep Roots of Conflict in the Middle East" and "Warfare in the Age

of the Crusades,” together with his general interest in the topic of the holy city, a study area he moved to on the advice of his Ph.D. supervisor, Daniel Callahan, “a Jerusalem scholar of the first rank” who urged him: “Go East, young man, Go East!” (p. xi).

Chapter I opens with the emblematic report of Christian sources: “Jerusalem was captured” (p. 11), a motto announcing the beginning of an entangled religious history with the arrival of Islam in the landscape of the holy city. From the outset, the author shows a solid knowledge of both Christian and Muslim sources, which he collated in his attempt to reconstruct the memories of conquest and concord in the life of the holy city. Hosler presents the status of Jerusalem during the early Islamic conquest as a vulnerable city during the transition from Byzantine/Persian to Muslim power. One brutal story in the history of Jerusalem is the coming of the Persians; for this chapter, Hosler relies on findings from the most relevant sources, especially with regard to the conundrum related to the number of victims discovered by archeologists at Mamilla cave (pp. 21–22). Although not avoiding the socio-historical content, it is easy to notice that the author’s main concern is with the military narrative, focusing on the strategies of armies and battlefield tactics (how the Byzantines or Persians advanced in their campaigns, how they organized their defense and fortifications, how they prepared for future confrontations). In this dynamic frame of military strategy, the focus lies on how historical sources capture and substantiate these moves around Jerusalem (encapsulating major religious events such as the Persian seizure of the cross and its return to Jerusalem), making the reader grasp that these are not technicalities of

military clashes decisive for the historical narrative, but changes with a significant impact on the public life and interreligious future of the holy city. Hosler builds well intertwined narrative sections, turning comfortably from clashes between Persians and Byzantines to battles between Byzantines and Arabs, with the Battle of Yarmuk of the year 636 meticulously described as the decisive event for the advance of Islam toward the holy city (pp. 37–45). The last section contextualizes the legendary Assurance of ‘Umar for Patriarch Sophronius that allegedly granted rights for Christians and their legacy in the Holy City (pp. 49–54), a pact invoked as model of tolerance for non-Muslims, although its origin remains a matter of dispute in the intellectual history of Christian–Muslim relations.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the leadership of Islam, with its Sunni/Shia split, in the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition to the general framework of the growth in importance of the two centers at Mecca and Medina, Hosler well understands how Jerusalem maintained its importance in Islam, stemming from the apocalyptic traditions (p. 66). The trend of the sources that Hosler attempts to highlight, of looking for tolerance from the pact of ‘Umar onwards, is interrupted by the al-Hakim attack and by the attack on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in 1009 and its destruction (p. 75). Such incidental facts, and many more, prove the existence of discord in the fabric of Jerusalemite society of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and onwards, and make Hosler remain steadfast behind his thesis, which he enunciates again: “Violence between Jews, Christians, and Muslims certainly manifested in and around Jerusalem itself, as has been shown. However, in that particular urban center, physical conflict was highly episodic and not

the dominant theme, nor anywhere close to being so” (p. 97). The exception to this rule is the First Crusade, or military campaign (1096–1099), the “elephant in the room, a single event universally remembered for its viciousness and lingering effect on memories of Jerusalem’s place in the history of violence and warfare” (p. 98). Apart from this scene of social disharmony that can be motivated more or less by a reverberation of the “sacralization of warfare” (p. 103) and an apocalyptic conviction, Hosler contends that in medieval times there was a normal life in Jerusalem, with schools and intellectuals of all Abrahamic religions (p. 106), as indicated by the reports of Jewish and Muslim pilgrims such as Benjamin of Tudela, al-Maqdisi, Ibn al-‘Arabi, or al-Ghazali. The author also gives space to reports of the crusaders’ arrival, their military tactics, the cohorts of soldiers, their circuit in the city alongside the procession of the clergy, and many other substantial narratives from period sources concerning insensitive actions and massacres. The author addresses the lessons of the crusade with the irenic point, related to the historian’s vocation, to look to “resolving differences,” pointing out that it is “always easier to use history to denounce the other” (p. 136).

Chapter 4 presents Jerusalem’s built infrastructure during the Frankish rule, the administration of faith in the holy city, and the relocation and the shaping of a new community with the Church of the Holy Sepulcher at its center. An appealing question is whether some Muslim residences remained in the city during the Frankish period. Hosler does not argue for a Muslim presence, but instead for a form of tolerance of Islamic worship occurring in the holy city (pp. 148–154). The chapter also reviews the (sometimes obscure)

records on the capture of Jerusalem by the famous Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, Saladin, in 1187. Hosler considers that, after so many centuries, parts of the “status quo” brought by the Pact of ‘Umar’ retained their validity during Saladin’s rule, and that “Saladin was, therefore, a key figure in the re-diversification of the city’s population by amplifying the trend lines of settlement and public devotion that had manifested in the Kingdom of Jerusalem” (p. 173). Another crucial aspect was that the routine of Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher also entered into the tolerated syllabus of the local power.

Chapter 5 (pp. 176–213) looks at other sources, drawing on lesser-known facts about a long history of expeditions, less concerned with warfare and more with strategic alliances, clashes between the ambitions of the Franks and the Ayyubid Muslims, diplomatic efforts and negotiations, betrayals, and attempted deals to secure power in Jerusalem or change the status of the holy city. As Hosler closes his chapter, all these complicated factors of the 13<sup>th</sup> century lead to the contention that “Jerusalem’s society was returning to its state during the days of ‘Umar in the seventh century: small, poor, and sparsely populated but, nonetheless, religiously diverse. The city remained vulnerable to attack, and indeed, in 1299–1300 the Mongol soldiers of the Ilkhanate territories may have entered it during the course of their war against the Egyptian Mamluks” (p. 213). The complicated history of the society of Jerusalem did not stop here, but continued onward to face other challenges, discord balanced with concord—this is Hosler’s key term in the book—, injustice but also tolerance. Hosler’s conclusion begins by quoting a relevant phrase attributed to Rashid Khaladi, professor at Co-

lumbia University in New York in 1992: “If the past has lessons for the future anywhere on the face of the earth, Jerusalem is the place” (p. 214). This can be the concluding remark of my review as well.

Finally, if anyone were to wonder why there was a need for another book about the history of Jerusalem, given that we already have an impressive monograph written by Simon Sebag Montefiore (2011), one should acknowledge that Hosler’s own work offers a different perspective on historical events, telling the story in an unconventional manner and with a better focus on time and space. This makes it a significant contribution, both through the exhaustive treatment of medieval sources, and through the way in which a thrilling narrative can be constructed and a plausible thesis defended, even if the author’s favorite approach challenges modern research on the medieval holy city. I can well recommend this book, which not only informs the reader interested in medieval socio-military history, but also illustrates a vital principle, valid today more than ever, whereby avoiding conflicts and engaging in the search for a sustainable peace based on tolerance between the Abrahamic faiths and traditions, especially in Jerusalem, the city that every religious community historically claims for itself, must be done by looking back and considering the lessons of the past, as Khaladi himself rightly and concisely states.



CĂTĂLIN-ȘTEFAN POPA

**LORÁND L. MÁDLY (Hg.)**

**Siebenbürgen zwischen Großungarn und dem österreichischen Gesamtstaat. Der Briefwechsel von Guberniumpräsident Ludwig Folliot von Crenneville und Hofkanzler Franz von Nadasdy (1861-1863)**

Berlin, Frank & Timme, 2023

**D**ER VON dem Klausenburger Historiker Loránd L. Mádly herausgegebene Band ist der 16. Titel, der in der DigiOst-Reihe in Zusammenarbeit mit deutschen Institutionen wie dem Collegium Carolinum, dem Herder-Institut und dem Leibniz-Institut für Ost- und Südosteuropaforschung erscheint. Die Reihe bietet dem Fachpublikum sowohl Tagungsbände als auch Bände, die unveröffentlichte historische Quellen vorstellen. In diese zweite Kategorie fällt auch das Werk von Loránd L. Mádly.

Das im vorliegenden Band verwendete Archivmaterial wurde während eines Forschungspraktikums im Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Wien ermittelt und später, während mehrerer Forschungsaufenthalte am Leibniz-Institut für Ost- und Südosteuropaforschung, Regensburg, kontextualisiert.

Der Band beruht auf die Korrespondenz von 1861-1863 zwischen Franz von Nadasdy, dem österreichischen Kanzler im Ministerrang, und Ludwig Folliot von Crenneville, dem Präsidenten der Siebenbürgischen Regierung. Um die Bedeutung dieser Korrespondenz aus einem breiteren Blickwinkel zu betrachten, hat der Autor einen großzügigen Einleitungsteil verfasst, in dem er den Übergang vom neoabsolutistischen System zu einem liberalen System darlegt, in dessen Rahmen der siebenbürgische Landtag im Zusammenhang mit der Einführung der ethnischen Repräsentation neu organisiert wurde.