

**Roger Crowley.** *The Accursed Tower: The Fall of Acre and the End of the Crusades*. New York: Basic Books, 2019. Maps. 272 pp. \$28.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-5416-9734-8.

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*The Accursed Tower: The Fall of Acre and the End of the Crusades* by Roger Crowley is a narrative history oriented on the battle of Acre and the sociocultural impact of its destruction in 1291. This work actively follows the train of source materials, crafting a narrative through fourteen chapters with an extended epilogue on the legacy of Acre. This monograph focuses on the final opportunity for Latin Christian influence within the Levant during the Seventh Crusade. The narrative perspective of Acre's position is from the eyes of both those in the past and modern laypeople. The editing of this monograph is also commendable as Crowley notes in his acknowledgments the assistance of Arabic and German translators who illuminated constructive directions in this research. This assistance is evident in reading the narrative from a multicultural perspective.

The beginning of the monograph asserts the dire position of the Latin Christian Europeans as they existed within a multiethnic conflict. This conflict fostered social movement between the hierarchy of classes on all warring sides. The variable social strata of crusading Christians cared about Acre as its port provided essential transport and retained that value throughout its history. The excess of motivations between the combatting nations over Acre is adequately distilled by Crowley in two chapters, "The Second Kingdom of Jerus-

alem" and "Death on the Nile." These short chapters increase the accessibility of the work and Crowley smoothly transitions the reader between the shifting historical narrative. For example, the important monastery of St. Sabas is central to the conflict for Acre, which reveals the wider struggle for trade supremacy between merchants of the Mediterranean and Black Sea. The manner in which Crowley portrays such simplicity is belied by the rich examples of social interactions provided.

This idea of an extended multiethnic conflict steaming to a head at the battle of Acre is continued throughout the monograph as Crowley establishes the competing trade armies of Genoa and Venice against a surging Mamluk sultanate. This methodology of analysis skillfully blends a fictional narrative approach with the veracity of source material. The auxiliary forces of the Mongols are positioned as overtly supporting the pope's call for an anti-Mamluk campaign, which was naturally doomed by Christian infighting. The observation that Crowley makes is one that could easily lead to further research into the Mongol-Mamluk relations that existed beforehand. The very role and social status of the Mamluks as slaves who defeated Christians needed reconciliation within the Latin Christian sphere. Space here could have been devoted to the Black Sea slave trade that

provided Mamluk leadership their military. Crowley provides illuminative social source material in multiple Latin contexts and this political position is briefly touched on. Alternatively, it is within individual cases of material analysis in the chapter “Bolts of Thunder, Flashes of Lightning” that Crowley’s work shines as he poses succinctly the values of opposing military arms. The coordinated bombardment of these war engines forced defenders to cover and provide heavier armaments like trebuchets to eliminate the battlements. This conclusion is preceded by the cultural ties to these armaments and Crowley’s research into the necessity of these instruments is interesting.

*The Accursed Tower* provides a narrative window into the multicultural end of the Crusades with grace and effective prose. Crowley is adept at distilling extant primary sources into digestible material. His authorial style makes the Christians’ slow struggle understandable as they fall to defensive siege positions. For example, the Templar

source that Crowley makes extensive use of observes the tactical ramifications of weather on the defenders. This narrative takes existing source material and expands on it to encompass the implication of environmental factors. He compares the observations made by the Templar sources to other such examples. He describes in vivid detail the vision of the defenders of the Accursed Tower. This effective method of analyzing and portraying history in narrative is seen best within the final chapters of the monograph. The turn to the Islamic response following the siege leads to the creation of apocryphal stories and fraudulent examples of accounts from similar sources. This development is interesting as it provides evidence of a multicultural impact of the war from alternative sources. This social narrative of the fall of Acre is an example of graceful negotiation of the past and the present as Crowley seeks to illuminate the positions of the crusaders and the people of Acre today.

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