

Judy A. Hayden and Nabil I. Matar, eds. *Through the Eyes of the Beholder: The Holy Land, 1517–1713*.

Islamic History and Civilization 97. Leiden: Brill, 2013. xvii + 238 pp. \$149. ISBN: 978-90-04-23417-8.

In recent years there has been a new wave of interest in European encounters with the Islamic world. This term, coined by Marshall Hodgson in 1958 seeks to make visible the “multiplicity of faiths and ethnicities that existed and participated in a society whose population was predominantly Muslim,” to use Mazin Tadros’s formulation (126).

This collection rides the wave and explores the varied responses to and representations of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, bringing together testimonies, images, and travelogues from a great variety of religious denominations and national perspectives. It investigates among other things whether the Holy Land was holy because its holiness was somehow “inherent in geography” or whether this was a side-product of the diverse writers’ piety. Even without further reading, a historian is inclined to believe in a complex combination of the two, but opening the pages of the book quickly rewards its reader with a plethora of new insights and a fascinating range of different eyewitnesses to Palestine, Eretz-Israel, Filastin, and Canaan, a land of fluid borders and both ambiguous and contested geographies. The editors remind us in the introduction that scholars of Euro-Christian travel and European expansion have often ignored that Jerusalem was not just an imagined and yearned for representation and source for identity building, but also a lived space, shared by its more permanent inhabitants.

The collection ranges chronologically from the Ottoman conquest of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria in 1517 to the growing Euro-Christian influence and naval presence in the Eastern Mediterranean in the eighteenth century. References and comparisons are helpfully made to earlier pilgrimage traditions, and the changes brought by the Protestant and Catholic Reformations are discussed in most articles, bringing into focus some transnational and cultural themes that cut across the divisions. Framed by a contextualizing introduction by the two editors and a concluding section by Nabil Matar, the collection begins with Matar’s preface and a new translation by Mohammad Asfour of a pilgrimage narrative by an orthodox priest written in Arabic and surviving as a manuscript in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (MS Arabe 312).

Among the most interesting articles (at least to this reader) were Galina Yermolenko’s, which compared two almost identical Russian descriptions of Jerusalem and how Russian imperial ideologies shaped these accounts, and Judy Hayden’s on Cornelis de Bruyn (ca. 1652–ca. 1727) as a painter, traveler, curiosity collector, and potential spy of the Holy Land. The reader will also learn from Nabil Matar’s and Joachim Östlund’s articles of how a Sufi scholar, a British Protestant chaplain, and a Swedish cleric differed in their views of Jerusalem and its multireligious atmosphere, and from Michael Rotenberg-Schwartz, how Eastern Christian and Jewish inhabitants varied in their perspective from Euro-Christian Franks who were just passing through. It would be interesting to find out more about how ideas and preconceptions of holy sites were shaped and information or prejudice produced and transmitted between locals (dragomen, inn keepers, caravan leaders, and guides) and visitors.

There were a few instances where Jerusalem was misspelled as “Jersusalem,” probably due to some technical error, and one where the death of an early modern English traveller was attributed to the wrong cause due to relying on a secondary source. These minor details and mishaps do not, however, prevent me from wholeheartedly recommending this refreshingly kaleidoscopic collection to

everyone interested in the varying ideas about holiness, travels in the Islamic world, and in the *histoires croisées* of encounters with the Holy Land.

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