



HRVOJE SPAJIĆ, *THE CRUSADES* – *A TEMPLAR VIEWPOINT*

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Book review

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Hrvoje Spajić's popular science book, *The Crusades. A Templar Point of View*, was published by Despot Infinitus in 2020. Hrvoje Spajić has already published some books on military issues (*The Waffen-SS: Dark Forces of Criminal Policy* 2010; *Great Islamic Conquests 632 - 750*, 2019; *Byzantium and War. Basic Military and Warfare Features of Byzantine Society 600 - 1453*, 2019), as well as a number of popular science articles (*Croatian Soldier, Military History*), and the publication of this book, in which he discussed the subject of the crusades, emphasizing their vision from a Templar point of view, only continued the successful path stopped with the actualization of topics from military history in Croatian historiography. The book has 403 pages, and since it is very extensive in content, its overview by chapters and sections will be presented in the text below.

Content

The chapter *Alarming the West* (p. 27–46), as an introductory chapter, provides an overview of all the key events that preceded the Crusades, which are indispensable for understanding the subject of the crusades as a major episode in church and military history. In this sense, it is especially important to understand the identity of what is understood as the “West”, which also had a specific view of its Christian “brethren” in Byzantium. It is also important to understand the papal authority, given that the pope called for the First Crusade, and in building his authority, which was perhaps the greatest in the West, he came into conflict for investiture with the German emperor Henry IV (1084 - 1105). For the success of the crusades, it was necessary to first create a cohesive “West”, and here the author indirectly announces this with his choice of titles for subchapters (e.g. *Disunity of the West*,



p. 27; *Feudal System in the West*, p. 28; *Consequences of the Collapse of Charlemagne*, p. 29).

The chapter entitled *The Intervention of the West and the Battle of Jerusalem* (p. 47-68) is the second chapter of the book and, as can be seen from the subchapter at the beginning (*The Holy Land - A Favorite Destination of Christian Pilgrims*, p. 47; *Pilgrimage as a Form of Martyrdom*, p. 48), begins with discussions of pilgrimage as one of the medieval ideals of life. It is also important to point out that the monks of the famous Cluny emphasized the pilgrimage to Jerusalem as the culmination of man's spiritual life (p. 48), and preventing Christians from fulfilling this obligation is one of the motives for starting the crusades. This chapter also deals with the Council of Clermont (1095), when Pope Urban II (1088-1099), bearing in mind the troubles faced by Christian pilgrims in Jerusalem, and probably bearing in mind the actions of the "fanatical" Egyptian caliph al-Hakim (985-1021), who ordered the destruction of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, called Christians to the crusades, promising them forgiveness of past sins and full forgiveness of earthly penances imposed by the Church (cf. p. 48-50). Contrary to the pope's expectations, this call gathered primarily the poor, not the knights or the able-bodied population, which resulted in the First Crusade, led by Peter the Hermit (the so-called *People's Crusade*, 1096, p. 55), which ended ingloriously. It was not until two months after this campaign that the "real" Crusade began to gather momentum in Constantinople, as the pope had expected, and which soon won several victories - at Nicaea (1097), Antioch (1098) and Jerusalem (1099), which also resulted in the shameful massacre of a large number of innocent people (p. 62). It is important to note that the author thoroughly analyzes certain sieges, and some of these analyses contain seemingly "fictional" elements that should be taken with caution. The "monotony" of descriptions of sieges and wars is broken by an "intellectual" idea or thought (e.g., that the crusaders, when afflicted with hunger and cold, began to suspect that God was abandoning them and punishing them for their iniquities, cf. p. 58), but by reading this chapter the reader will also get to know the methodology by which the author presented the crusades.

The chapter *The Foundation of the Outremer and the Templars* (p. 69-80) is the third chapter of the book, and although it is shorter in content, it is actually one of the most important. In this chapter, the author



first explains the term that will run through the rest of the book – the *Outremer* (i.e. *the Overseas*), which was actually a collective name for the conquered areas of the crusaders, where several states were then established (cf. p. 69). What is also important, secondly, in this chapter is that the author deals with the emergence of the Knights Templar (as a project of Hugo de Payens; 1070 - 1136), as well as their original role, which may have included protection of holy places and / or defense of pilgrims (cf. p. 72). Perhaps King Baldwin II of Jerusalem. (1118-1131), in order to maintain order in his country, convinced Hugo of the necessity of the project (p. 76). Therefore, from this chapter onwards, the role of the Templars in the crusades will also be considered.

In the next chapter, *The West and the Outremer* (p. 81–96), the author goes on to describe the chronological sequence of events in the *Outremer*, explains in detail some of the Knights Templar's rules of chivalry, and questions the morality of the crusades, taking into account Christ's teaching. Regarding the chronological sequence of events, the previously mentioned Baldwin II sent Hugo de Payens and William of Bures, Prince of Galilee, to Western Europe, in order to persuade Fulk of Anjou (c. 1189-1143), a powerful landowner from central France, to marry Melisend (1105. - 1161), his daughter, and thus he became the heir of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, but also, secondly, gathered an army to attack Damascus, a strategically important fortress located in Islamic territory, whose conquest would open the possibility of establishing a new principality and provide a rich prey to the Latins (cf. p. 83–84). As for the Templar rules they were, for example, forbidden to wear pointed shoes and laces, gold and silver ornaments, linen or woolen food bags, or to boast of some of their heroism from the past (p. 90). In this way, the author also opens the question of the knightly ideal, but also the Templar way of life, without which it is impossible to fully understand the course of the crusades or their daily lives, in which the Templars played a prominent role. In order to understand the Templar role in the crusades from a military-strategic point of view, it is important to single out the author's valuable thesis that the *Templar Rules* seem to be more about saving the souls of knights than the effectiveness of military force (cf. p. 91). He analyzes in detail the character and work of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153; p. 83), who, for example, condemned the monk community in Cluny, emphasizing their easy lifestyle and opulence (cf. p. 81), but who, with his pheno-



menal performances and speeches throughout Europe (for example, at the Council of Troyes in 1129, p. 85, 87, 91; when the Church also ratified the Templar order), gave great support to the crusaders. The crusades, without a detailed analysis of the characters of prominent figures, cannot be fully understood.

The chapter *Faith and the Sword* (p. 97–112) is the next chapter, and with regard to its content, this chapter builds on the previous one - the description of the Templar way of life continues, as well as some other passages from their rulebook. However, in this chapter the author details the various donations to the Templar order made throughout Europe (for example, the estates of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, p. 97; the donation of Alfonso Jordan, Count of Toulouse and Tripoli, p. 98; the will of King Alfonso of Aragon, p. 100–101, while the Count of Barcelona, Ramon Berenguer, vowed, as well as some of his vassals, in Catalonia in 1134, to serve the Templars for a year, p. 98). It is ironic that the Templars, although bound by the basic vow of poverty, were once one of the richest institutions in Europe, which often knew how to finance certain needs of certain rulers for the crusades. In addition, the role of bankers can be attributed to them. Also, with the bull *Omne datum optimum* (1139) the pope exempted them from paying tithes, although they could collect it (p. 108). Given the title of this chapter (*Faith and the Sword*) and taking into account its content, it is possible to say that this chapter sought to show the inseparability of two seemingly opposite ideals - faith and the sword - and how, given this contrast, some church practices that are inherently contrary to their basic Christian values can be seen as “understandable”. This chapter also mentions the further course of events in the *Outremer*, such as the failed attack on the previously mentioned important Damascus fortress (p. 105–106), and the establishment of the Knights Hospitaller, i.e. another important knightly order (p. 99–100), and the author also brings a sequence of events on the Iberian Peninsula, where the rulers also sought Templar services and assistance in trying to carry out a Reconquista (cf. p. 98). However, an important thesis that should be singled out is that the Templar activity was, above all, centered on the Holy Land, and not on the Iberian Peninsula (cf. p. 98).

In the chapter *The Templars and Palestine* (p. 113–126), the author emphasized the further course of events in the *Outremer*, namely the Second Crusade, which began after the fall of the County of Edessa



(1144) into the hands of Imad al-Din Zengi (1085 - 1145), the governor of Mosul. According to the author, although the attack on Aleppo, ruled by Zengi's son Nur al-Din (1146-1174), would create the necessary preparations for the crusaders to attack Edessa, the crusaders, because of a large booty, decided to attack Damascus again, that is to say the city which was even ready to join the Franks in the fight against Nur al-Din. Eventually, the Crusaders were defeated near Damascus in 1148 (p. 120–121). This chapter also deals with the profile of the famous persona of Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204), the wife of the French king Louis VII (1137-1180), and the chapter also deals with the conflict between the crusaders and the Byzantines, which greatly split the crusaders, before they even reached the “right” destination. Furthermore, in this chapter it is possible to see some deeper factors that may not be in the mind of the interested individual when judging the cause of the failure of the crusades, such as the disagreement between the crusader elite and local barons over which place to attack (p. 120). Also, what is fundamental, this chapter, through several elements, indirectly reveals to the reader how important the Templar role was in the *Outremer*, and just how much their interventions, either directly or indirectly, affected the outcomes of certain conflicts and settlements. This is why the author probably decided to title the chapter *The Templars and Palestine*.

The chapter *Latins in the Holy Land* (p. 127–144) is the next, seventh chapter of the book, and since one of the unavoidable aspects, when considering the crusades, is certainly the understanding of social everyday life in the war-torn area, the author decided to deal with it more thoroughly in this chapter. After all, one of the consequences of the crusades was certainly the acquaintance of the West with Eastern culture (see some examples on p. 127), and in what details this acquaintance was manifested, is shown in detail. In this chapter as well, some aspects of Templar life are presented, such as the vow of obedience (p. 135), the importance of the horse (p. 134), but also, for example, the possession of private property (p. 134). Intrigued individuals will be able to learn something about various stereotypes that are, unfortunately, still related to the topic of the crusades, as well as the warring parties.

The chapter *Politics in the Outremer* (p. 145–156) is the next chapter, and primarily deals with the further chronological sequence of events



in the *Outremer*, among which the conflict over power between Melisenda and her son, Baldwin III (1143-1162), should be singled out, in which Baldwin emerged victorious (cf. p. 145). However, in the further development of events, a great role will be played by Melisenda's cousin Constance (1127-1163), Princess of Antioch, to whom, after the death of her husband Raymond of Poitiers (c. 1115-1119), the question of remarriage arose. Although it was thought that Constance would marry the widower and brother-in-law of the emperor of the Byzantine Empire, the Norman John Roger, Constance eventually married Raynald of Châtillon (c. 1125-1187), a French knight who was "cruel, impudent, a very brave and probably an extremely handsome man" (p. 148), and at the heart of this chapter is Raynald's work. From Baldwin III, Raynald first received the title of Prince of Antioch, entering thus into conflict with the Byzantine emperor, imprisoned the patriarch of Antioch Aimerico of Limoges and plundered Cyprus with the Armenian king Thoros, for which he eventually had to repent before the Byzantine emperor (p. 148-150). The relationship between Amalric (1162-1174), the King of Jerusalem who succeeded Baldwin III and the Templars, is also discussed, who grew cold after the Templars surrendered a fortress in a cave in the Transjordan without a fight to Nur al-Din and which also resulted in the Templars refusing to participate in Amalric's plan to invade Egypt (p. 153). Through this relationship, it is evident that the Templars, and what is the essence of the title of the book (*The Crusades. A Templar Point of View*), can be seen as an independent factor during the crusades, both a military and a political one.

The next chapter is entitled *The Answer of Islam* (p. 157-172), which introduces us, in more detail, to the profile of the aforementioned Raynald, but also to the well-known figure of Saladin (1138-1193), about whom historiography leaves a relatively positive judgment. If through the previous chapters the reader could get the impression of disorientation and disorganization of the crusaders, which, as mentioned in one paragraph, often got into trouble before they even reached the Holy Land, through this chapter it is possible to get the impression that the disunity of the crusader states in the *Outremer*, as well as the lack of greater support from the West, played an equally important role in the completely bad outcome of the crusades. The disunity of the Franks, for example, benefited Saladin very well, who tried to



conquer Jerusalem, although he did not succeed in doing so at the time (1177), partly because of Raynald's heroism (p. 164).

The chapter *Saladin: The Sword of Allah* (p. 173–188) is the tenth chapter of the book. This chapter sheds further light on Saladin's personality as an important political factor, but also further indirectly reveals how much the disunity of the crusaders helped the other side. Also, the reader gets acquainted with the person of Guido Lusignan, the new and "hated" King of Jerusalem (1186-1192) and the fiancé of Sybil, sister of Baldwin IV (1174 - 1185). Meanwhile, Raynald of Châtillon, who supported Guido, became Saladin's main opponent, and even tried to abduct Muhammad's body (p. 174). In such circumstances, the Count of Tripoli, Raymond (1152-1187), even sought an alliance with Saladin in the fight against Guido, which was a fatal mistake for the Count that will label him as a "traitor" (cf. p. 176, 179). Also, although some deeper political factors certainly played a greater role in the overall outcome of the crusades, any conclusion on the outcome of the Crusades would be incomplete without taking into account the outcome of some battles. One of the most prominent battles of the crusades took place near Hattin (July 3-4, 1187), in which the reconciled Guido and Raymond, with a huge army, clashed with Saladin and suffered great defeat (p. 178-180). This chapter also provides a detailed description of this battle, with fatal consequences for Christians, including Saladin's capture of Jerusalem (1187), but also the capture of Guido and the execution of Raynald.

The chapter *Richard the Lionheart: King and Crusader* (p. 189–204) is the next chapter, and at the heart of this chapter, as the title alludes to, is the person of Richard the Lionheart (1189–1199), who imposed himself as the leading figure in the next crusade. After her marriage to Louis VII, the aforementioned Eleanor married King Henry II of England. (1154-1189), and their third son was Richard, a "brilliant strategist" (p. 190) and, along with Frederick II Hohenstauf (Barbarossa) (1152 - 1190) and King Philip II August of France (1180 - 1223), the instigator of the Third Crusade. The personality of Frederick II is also considered in detail, as well as the disagreement between Richard and Philip, due to which the coordination of the attack failed. Chronologically, this chapter deals with the first part of the Third Crusade, in which Richard conquered Cyprus (which he later sold to the Templars), but also in which the crusaders conquered the very valuable booty of



Accra (1191). It should also be noted that during this crusade, King Richard and King Philip were struck by a disease (*arnaldia* or *leonardie*), which, according to the author, greatly influenced the diplomacy and wars of Richard (cf. p. 198-199).

This chapter is followed by the chapter *Diplomacy and the War in Palestine* (1191-1192) (p. 205-226). This chapter completes the personality of Richard the Lionheart, and since diplomacy is an important part of warfare, the author tried to draw attention to this as well, through several examples. Spajić also pointed out the importance of diplomacy in the war in his second book, *Byzantium and War* (2019), when he presented diplomacy as one of the important factors (not the only one) due to which Byzantium survived as long as it did as a state and it seems that the crusaders also took notice of the importance of diplomacy. This chapter discusses the second part of the Third Crusade, i.e. the Battle of the Arsuf Forest (September 7, 1191), the March on Byte Nuba, and the Battle of Jaffa (July 28 - August 5, 1192). The chapter ends with the death of Richard, and it should be noted that in the meantime, Cyprus was returned to Richard, who soon sold it again.

The next chapter is entitled *Internal Enemies and the Disasters of 1204* (p. 227-246). This chapter also touches on the important Fourth Crusade, which is important to Croatian history as well, when the Venetian Republic, instead of paying for transport to the Holy Land, asked the crusaders to conquer Zadar (1202), and during this campaign Constantinople would fall (1204), which is described in great detail. Also, in this chapter the Templars again come to a wider circle of the author's considerations, and the author deals with the negative perception (and even envy) of the public towards the Templars, which is caused primarily by their great wealth (cf. p. 229). Some also attributed greed to the Templars, all of which contradicted the basic virtues of poverty and mercy of Hugo de Payens, their aforementioned founder. In this chapter, the author brings another side of the story, which presents the Templars in a positive light, and which discourages the reader from immediately, uncritically, accepting this negative public perception of the Templar order.

This is followed by the chapter *The Crusades Against the Albigensians* (p. 247-266). The crusades, in fact, do not only mean an invasion of the Levant under Islamic rule; the crusades also meant fighting various factions, or heresies, within Christianity. In this chapter, the



author deals with the crusade of the Cathars and Albigensians in the province of Languedoc, and discusses the potential motives for undertaking such a crusade. He also considers, of course, the Templar view of such a crusade.

The chapter *The Failure of the Fifth Crusade* (1217–1221) (p. 267–284) is the next chapter in the book, and this chapter deals with the Fifth Crusade, which is also particularly important to Croatian historiography as one of its instigators was also the Croatian-Hungarian king Andrew II (1205 - 1235). The key to the Fifth Crusade was the conquest of Egypt, and for this purpose a prominent role was played by the fortress of Damietta, whose siege is described in detail. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the consequences of the Fifth Crusade, and the author concludes that it consequently destabilized the Islamic Ayyubid Empire (cf. p. 280).

The chapter entitled *The Holy Land in the 13th Century* (p. 285–300) is the next, sixteenth chapter of the book, and this chapter discusses in more detail the socio-economic status of the *Outremer*, i.e. the question of continuity (cf. p. 286) after the Jaffa Agreement (1192) and Saladin's death (1193), as well as its legal aspects. The significance of Cyprus, which became a kingdom in 1197, and whose fate did not depend on the fate of the mainland (in the *Outremer*) or vice-versa (p. 285), is considered. The sentimental and commercial epicenter of the mainland *Outremer* was either Jerusalem or Accra, and given that in this period of the crusades only Accra was mostly in Christian hands (Jerusalem was between 1229 and 1244, but even then the capital remained Accra, cf. p. 286), its significance is also analyzed in detail. It is also stated that, according to some sources, Accra earned up to 50,000 pounds a year, or “a huge amount comparable to all royal revenues in Western Europe” (p. 286), and that it occupied a central position in lucrative trade east-west roads and that its wealth also supported the survival of Christian enclaves (cf. p. 287). The author also questions whether the emergence of the Mongols also caused the financial decline of the *Outremer* (p. 288), as well as the threat to the *Outremer* that followed the coming to power of the Mamluks in Egypt in 1250 (p. 289). He states that the image of the *Outremer* in the eyes of the West was full of “challenges, crises and threats” (p. 290), while the real situation was significantly different - the Franks consolidated control over the coastal plain from Tortosa to the fortress of Ashkelon (p. 290).



He also elaborates on the Lombard War (1228-1243) and the War of St. Sabe (1256 - 1270). The chapter ends with the internal turmoil in the *Outremer*, which only intensified the impending danger from the Egyptian Mamluks (cf. p. 299). The disadvantage of this chapter is that the author presents some chronological events that followed much later than those presented in previous chapters, which makes the chapter somewhat more difficult to follow.

The next chapter is entitled *The Crusades of Frederick Hohenstauf* (1227-1229) (p. 301-314). At the heart of this chapter is the crusade, which was repeated after the failure of Damietta, under the leadership of Frederick II Hohenstauf (1194 - 1250). The person of Frederick II is also considered in detail, who had a specific understanding of religious interpretations, which from today's point of view can be interpreted as "atheistic". He doubted, for example, the virgin birth of Jesus and the Eucharist, and considered Muhammad and Moses "deceivers" (cf. p. 303). After Pope Honorius III (1216-1227) had crowned Frederick emperor, Frederick II undertook a crusade, probably also motivated by presenting himself as the supreme ruler of the Christian world. However, from the very beginning of the crusade, trouble ensued - Frederick fell ill and was forced to anchor in Otranto, and then Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) excommunicated him (1227 and 1228) because he did not fulfill his oath. After he arrived in Accra, he was deprived of the authority to command the crusaders. Since the crusader army was not that large, his main means of struggle was diplomacy, where he was helped by the changing circumstances in the Ayyubid Empire (p. 306-309). The further course of this chapter discusses the diplomatic relationship between Frederick and al-Kamil (1177-1238), which ultimately resulted in the Jaffa Agreement of February 18, 1229 (p. 308), when Jerusalem was returned to the Christians. However, that agreement did not resonate far, and Frederick, due to the events in Italy, was quickly forced to leave the Holy Land. In this chapter, too, the emphasis is once again on the importance of diplomacy as a means of struggle.

This is followed by the chapter on *Activities for the Survival of the Holy Land* (p. 315-324). This chapter deals with the further course of events in the *Outremer*. Namely, in 1239 the agreement between Frederick II expired and al-Kamil (according to which Jerusalem belonged to the Christians), and although the sultan of Damascus Ismail



proposed to the French an agreement against his cousin, al-Kamil's son Ayyub, who then ruled the sultanate in Cairo, it did not bear the desired outcome. There was disunity among the crusaders; the Hospitallers, on the other hand, made an agreement with Ayyub in Cairo and, in order to conquer Jerusalem, Ayyub called in a tribe of mercenary nomads - the Khorezmian Turks, then settled near Edessa. Jerusalem fell in 1244, and the chapter ends with the Battle of Forbie (October 17-18, 1244), where the Egyptian army clashed with the combined army of Damascus and Accra and defeated the crusaders. Consequently, according to the author, the Christians never again possessed power in the crusader states, and both the crusaders and the crusades lost their popularity and appeal (cf. p. 322).

King Louis and the Battle of Egypt (1248–1250) (p. 325–336) is the next chapter of the book, and at the heart of this chapter is the crusade undertaken by King Louis IX (1226 - 1270), which also accelerated the collapse of the Ayyubids, encouraging the rise of the military elite of professional Turkish slave warriors, i.e. the Mameluks, to political power instead (p. 325). The personality of Louis IX is analyzed in detail, as well as the manner in which the campaign for the Seventh Crusade was undertaken, for which the legate Odo of Châteauroux, Cardinal Bishop Tuscula (1244-1273), preached. In December 1248, in Nicosia, Louis even negotiated with the Mongol embassy, and on June 5, 1249, he anchored near Damietta, which he had conquered. However, in the further course of the war, Louis did not listen to the advice of the barons of the *Outremer* to head toward the port of Alexandria, rather he took the advice of his brother Robert, Count of Artois, to head south along the east bank of the Nile towards Mansoura, and in that march southwards, Robert was hasty, and the crusaders fell into a trap near Mansura. King Louis soon came into Islamic captivity, and the Templars played a role in his rescue (cf. p. 331-332). From this, it is possible to conclude that the "little things" really played an important role in the outcome of the crusades.

The next, the twentieth chapter of the book, is entitled *The Failure of Louis's Politics and the Rise of the Mameluks* (p. 337-346), and deals with the further chronological course of events. After military campaigns in Egypt, Louis IX remained in the Holy Land for some time, and was given an unexpected diplomatic opportunity when the Mamluks in Egypt came into conflict with the Ayyubids, who remained in power



in Syria. While, on the one hand, and without the knowledge of Louis IX, the Templars negotiated with the sultan of Damascus, Louis made a settlement with the Mamluks that resulted in the release of Christian captives, and he also negotiated with the Mongols. Before returning to France (1254), he had the coastal cities - Accra, Caesarea, Jaffa and Sidon - fortified. After Louis' departure, there was no consensus among the Franks; Bohemund VI of Antioch and Tripoli (1252–1275) accepted Mongol rule, and the Franks in Accra saw no advantage in this submission (cf. p. 339–340). Shortly afterwards, the Mamluk victory against the Mongols at the Battle of Ain Jalut (1260, p. 341) created a new threat to the *Outremer*, which resulted in the fall of Caesarea, Haifa, Safet, Antioch, and some other cities. Louis IX even undertook a crusade again, but a sudden death in 1270 interrupted everything.

The Fall of Accra in 1291 (p. 347–356) is the penultimate pivotal chapter of the book, and despite a complete Christian catastrophe has already been foretold in the previous chapter, this chapter deals with the final operations in the *Outremer*. It has already been mentioned how important Accra was, and with its fall (1291), which is also present in the title of the chapter, the author concluded this historical review.

The Roots of the Crusades and the Great Jihad (p. 357–369) is the last chapter of the book. In the concluding chapter of the book, the author uses various inquiries, as can be seen from the title of the subchapter (e.g. *Carolingians: The New Israel*, p. 357–358; *Charlemagne: Father of Europe*, p. 358; *Popularity of Saintly Relics as a Substitute for Fear of an Uncertain World*, p. 359;...), to “compare” the crusades with jihad. Of the theses presented in the Conclusion, it should be noted that the crusades were the first imperial venture of Christian intervention, that the established crusader states (there were five in all) needed a standing army, that the enrichment of the Templars provoked great resistance from public opinion, especially because, with the disappearance of the crusader rule in the Middle East, the reasons for their existence “disappeared” as well, but also that, for example, the crusades led to a boom in trade between Europe and the *Outremer*. It should also be noted that the interaction between Western Christian and Islamic cultures influenced the development of European civilization and the awakening of the Renaissance (cf. 367–368).

After the main chapters, at the end of the book there are some more



“technical” parts that complement the content of the book. These are *Chronology* (p. 371–381; the first part *Genesis*, p. 371; the second part *Judaism*, p. 371–372; the third part *Paganism*, p. 372; the fourth part *Christianity*, p. 372–373; the fifth part *Islam*, p. 373–376; sixth part *The Crusaders*, p. 376–381), *Dictionary* (p. 383–385), *Rulers* (p. 387–391; with the following parts *Papacy*, 387–388; *Germany*, p. 388; *Byzantine Empire*, p. 388; *France*, p. 388; *England*, p. 388–389; *Sicily*, p. 389; *Castile*, p. 389; *Léon*, p. 389; *Aragon*, p. 390; *Hungary*, p. 390; *Ottoman Empire*, p. 390; *Jerusalem*, p. 390–391; *Antioch*, p. 391; *Tripoli*, p. 391; *Edessa*, p. 391; *Burgundy*, p. 391), *Literature* (pp. 393–394), *Index* (p. 395–402) and *Author’s Note* (p. 403).

Conclusion

Hrvoje Spajić’s book *The Crusades. The Templar Point of View* undoubtedly brought to attention the topic of the crusades in Croatia, which were very important for Croatian history, especially if we keep in mind the Fourth Crusade, but also King Andrew II, who was one of the initiators of the Fifth Crusade. What’s more, Croatia was in an important geostrategic position, that is to say, on the way to the Holy Land, and there have been scientific papers¹ that tried to show that the Templar estates in Croatia were located along the roads leading to the Holy Land, given to the fact that one of the Templar’s tasks, and as is highlighted in this overview, was to “supervise the roads” for the pilgrims. All in all, I have no doubt that after reading this book, someone will find and explore a new aspect that connects the crusades and Croatian history.

If someone has read Spajić’s books before, such as *The Great Arab Conquests* or the book *Byzantium and Warfare*, they will see that this book was written on a similar basis. Spajić’s books always aim to be debatable, and it is always interesting when the reader compares the conclusion he came to with that of the author. I can say that what I considered important definitely coincides with the author’s conclusions, and I have the impression that the disunity of the crusaders, with frequent dynastic turmoils, only accelerated the crusade “fiasco” which, taking into account many other factors, the tactical ones as well

1 E.g. the paper by Tomislav Matić, *Balkan Crusaders: Economic and Political Role of the Templars in Croatia*, Papers: Papers of the Institute of Croatian History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb, vol. 41, no. 1, 2009, p. 367–394.



(haste, for example), was inevitable. Also, the fact that Spajić, considering the topic of the crusades, processed profiles of prominent historical figures (e.g. Frederick II), as well as the socio-economic aspect of wars and analyzed prominent battles, only shows with what commitment and knowledge the author approached the main issue. Spajić's book, regardless of its popular scientific profile, could become a must-have starting point for anyone interested in dealing with the crusades. Although one may get the impression that Spajić, while dealing with the subject of the crusades, gave perhaps "too little" of the Templar point of view, which is indicated in the title of this book, Spajić actually offered more than he could. First of all, reading this book, the reader has enough chapters and subchapters through which he will clearly see how the Templar order functioned as one independent "institution" during the crusades. Even through such a perception, Spajić justified this title of the work. In addition, the subject of the Templars is inadequately represented in Croatian historiography - apart from Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, Lelja Dobronić and more recently Juraj Belaj, who in fact primarily dealt with the legacy of the Templars in Croatia, interest in the Templars in general in the context of world history, is very weak in our country. Perhaps the name of Krešimir Kužić, who published the book *Croats and Crusaders*, could be added, but in that book the emphasis is actually on the idea of the crusaders, and not on the Templars. From this, it is possible to conclude that Spajić was the first Croatian author to consider the Templar order in one book in our country, in general, although there are some translations of foreign authors (e.g. the book *Templars* by Regina Pernoud). Considering that, of course it is not surprising that Spajić's book is based primarily on what he came across in foreign secondary literature. And in addition to emphasizing the Templars, he left enough room to conclude that another important order of knights - the Hospitallers - also acted as an independent "institution" during the crusades. But the topic of hospitals, in great detail, has yet to be considered.

Considering everything that has been mentioned, I would recommend this book primarily to anyone interested in military and church history, the Middle Ages and the crusades. The book is, of course, a rich source of knowledge of general culture, and ultimately, I believe that this book will be decently accepted and that many others will begin to research the subject of the crusades.