PART ONE

HISTORY
CHAPTER ONE

JERUSALEM (1099/1120–1187/91)

Infrastructure

Modern-day visitors to Jerusalem look largely in vain for the medieval headquarters of the Hospitallers because, with the exception of the Church of St. John the Baptist, the order’s buildings served as a quarry for the rebuilding of the city’s walls in the sixteenth century and, beginning in 1893, the Church of the Redeemer was erected on a section of the Hospitallers’ former premises. Yet, the rectangular area to the south of the Holy Sepulcher is still called ‘muristan,’ an Arabic word of Persian origin meaning ‘hospital,’ which is a reminder that the Hospitallers’ origins predated the First Crusade and have to be seen in the context of the city’s earlier Islamic medical services.

The Templars’ Jerusalem headquarters, on the other hand, are still very visible as they used to be in and around al-Aqsa Mosque, an eighth-century structure standing on the foundations of an older basilica on the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount). To the crusaders, al-Aqsa was the temple or palace of Solomon (or the location of the same), however, the crusaders’ changes and additions to al-Aqsa were undone by Saladin in 1187, and between 1938 and 1942, when extensive renovations were undertaken, the remaining crusader structures were dismantled and moved into the Islamic Museum which stands on the grounds of the former Templar refectory.

All medieval maps of Jerusalem feature the Templars’ headquarters, but only a few those of the Hospitallers. This is not surprising. The Templars’ headquarters were associated with Solomon and therefore a locus sanctus (holy place) visited by pilgrims. The hospital of St. John, on the other hand, originally belonged to the compound of the Benedictine monastery of St. Mary of the Latins, an eleventh-century foundation which is listed on almost all medieval