



The Leper King and his Heirs: Baldwin IV and the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem

Bernard Hamilton

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The reign of King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem (1174–85) has traditionally been seen as a period of decline when, because of the king's illness, power came to be held by unsuitable men who made the wrong policy decisions. Notably, they ignored the advice of Raymond of Tripoli and attacked Saladin, who was prepared to keep peace with the Franks while uniting the Islamic near east under his rule. This book challenges that view, arguing that peace with Saladin was not a viable option for the Franks; that the young king, despite suffering from lepromatous leprosy (the most deadly form of the disease) was an excellent battle leader who strove with some success to frustrate Saladin's imperial ambitions; that Baldwin had to remain king in order to hold factions in check; but that the society over which he presided was, contrary to what is often said, vigorous and self-confident.

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