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Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht
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To Rule Jerusalem is an historical and ethnographic account of the twentieth-century struggle for Jerusalem. The volume examines how Jerusalem is doubly divided, on the one hand between Israelis and Palestinians, both of whom ground their national identities in the city, as well as within each nation between those who put primacy in the democratic decisions of their nations and those who would yield to a higher divine law.

Professors Friedland and Hecht explore how Jerusalem has figured as a battleground in conflicts over the relation between Zionism and Judaism and between Palestinian nationalism and Islam. Based on hundreds of interviews with powerful players and ordinary citizens over the course of a decade, this book evokes the ways in which these conflicts are experienced and managed in the life of the city. *To Rule Jerusalem* is a compelling study of the intertwining of religion and politics, exploring the city simultaneously as an ordinary place and an extraordinary symbol.

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To Rule Jerusalem

ROGER FRIEDLAND
*University of California,
Santa Barbara*

RICHARD HECHT
*University of California,
Santa Barbara*



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For Debra – who will always take me to Jerusalem
Roger Friedland

*For Joan – who cherishes Jerusalem and its people
with me*
Richard Hecht

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Preface

Jerusalem is at war – with itself. In this city Judaism, Christianity, and Islam fought their defining battles. Here, in this century, two nations have declared themselves. Israelis and Palestinians both claim the city as their capital.

Rival prophets, warring nations. The war for Jerusalem has multiple fronts. At the edge, between forests to the west dropping precipitously to the Mediterranean Sea and deserts to the east stretching throughout the Arab world, lies a stone city creased by deep valleys. In reality, it is just a small, slightly dusty provincial town, cut of gray and pink stone, astride a small mountain range. But its air is seeded with pine pollen, the powder of bone, and memory. This last bends the light and makes the city a luminous medium of dream and nightmare.

The city is a central stake, a battleground, an ineffable symbol, not just to those who live within it, but to peoples and powers around the world. The conflicts that consume it reverberate in Washington, Rome, and Jeddah. And conversely even the smallest geopolitical shifts can shake its streets.

The contest between these larger nations and religions shows itself in Jerusalem, not just as ideology, but as life, in the daily struggles between the city's neighborhoods, which consider each other alien and dangerous zones. The city threatens always, everywhere, to crack into pieces or explode; yet it seems to grow inexorably, driven by the very forces that would tear it apart. And one must never forget that Jerusalem is also just a place whose residents must make do. There are understandings, interdependencies, codes of coexistence, as well as the bladed power of the state and the inertial force of life.

Others have told the history of its stones. We tell the city's contemporary story, the meanings its inhabitants imprint on its hard surfaces, how Jerusalemites experience and manage religious and national conflicts, of which the city is a chromosome. We explore the ways in which residents' ordinary lives shape and are shaped by this extraordinary city, and in so doing, we both map and chronicle the city's cultural wars.

To Rule Jerusalem presents the city's many voices. We have walked

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Jerusalem's streets and alleyways, learning how its people live their lives, understand the lives of others, and defend themselves against rival claims. Our footsteps range across the entire ideological and social spectrum, from the clerics of the Muslim Brotherhood to the rabbis of Gush Emunim, from the Likud minister of foreign affairs who vowed Israel would never cede sovereignty over Judea and Samaria to the Palestinian construction worker building the settlements he hoped would one day disappear.

We have tried to convey the assumptions, the logic, the local justice, and indeed the common humanity of each of the city's communities. To convey the contours of each world, we have used its individuals' words. To represent a way of seeing, a cosmology, a point of view, what each individual says is legitimate data. But because we have also sought to find out what actually happened in particular places and times, we have also used many of these same individuals as informants. As representations of reality, an individual's words cannot necessarily be taken at face value. In Jerusalem, the real is always subject to contest. We have tried to check our informants' assertions against other sources. However, there inevitably will be accounts whose construction is strongly influenced by our informants' world views. In these cases, we have tried to offer alternative accounts of the same phenomenon or to indicate in the text what we believe actually happened. In such a complex and charged situation, we will have inevitably missed part of the story. All quotations not otherwise documented are from our interviews done between 1983 and 1993. A complete list of these is available from the authors upon request.

An urban and political sociologist and a historian of religions, we have been observing and interviewing Jerusalemites together since 1983, when we first began with more than a year of daily field work. Over the ensuing decade, we have returned repeatedly for shorter periods to the city, following the many figures we identified then as either influential leaders or emblematic articulators of the world views of a particular part of the metropolitan maze. Although the constellation of forces has shifted, although some may have become more visible and others less so, the stability of Jerusalem's political culture is attested to by the fact that most of these same individuals still represent, or count, within their respective worlds.

In the course of our research, we were stoned, shot at, physically assaulted, robbed, taken into custody in a "closed" military area, and verbally abused. But mainly we experienced some of the most profound hospitality two ethnographers could ever imagine. Jerusalemites' patience with our ignorance – and sometimes our insensitivity – astounded us. This was true even though Israelis sometimes resented our efforts to

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say anything about “their” country as American scholars; Orthodox Jews would often try to turn us toward repentance and occasionally refused to have anything to do with us as non-Orthodox Jews; Israelis would entreat us to settle in the land or implicitly denigrate us for our diaspora mentality as American Jews; Palestinians would mistrust our fundamental capacity to understand as Jews and had either great hopes that our country would someday compel Israel to recognize the Palestinian claim or bitterness that as Americans we were citizens of a blind neocolonial state. But through it all, people talked, offering up their lives for examination, for recognition, even for expiation.

And through it all we ate. In each home we entered, there were always coffee or juice, fresh-baked cookies and cakes, shortbread, strudel, baklava, and candies. The best cooks turned out to be the most bitter enemies, and most interviews could not have proceeded if we had not sampled the offerings that were so graciously provided us. Sometimes, after four or five interviews in a day, we could barely eat dinner.

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