

Political Manifestations in the Religious Landscape of Jerusalem

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Summary

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Dome of the Rock, and the Western Wall are holy sites with deep religious significance; however, they also reflect strong political messages. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built over a demolished temple of Venus as a symbol of the territorial dominance of the newly Christianized Eastern Roman Empire. Several centuries later, Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik, constructed the Dome of the Rock on the large, open Haram al-Sharif (noble sanctuary) as a rival to the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre. Its magnificence signified to both Christians and Jews the advent of Islamic rule. More recently, the State of Israel has demonstrated its control of the city by altering access to its most holy site — the Western Wall —, by demolishing a Muslim neighbourhood and replacing it with a large plaza that serves not only for gatherings on religious holidays, but also for military inductions and nationalistic festivities. The close proximity of the Dome of the Rock and the Western Wall continues to strain relations between Jews and Muslims in Jerusalem. As the city's planners continue to build religious structures, they must take into account the political message that will be conveyed by the structure, for in Jerusalem, religion and politics form an inseparable link.

Résumé

L'Eglise du Saint-Sépulcre, le Dôme du Rocher et le Mur de l'Ouest sont des sites sacrés qui ont une profonde signification religieuse; mais ils sont aussi reflets de messages politiques importants. L'Eglise du Saint-Sépulcre fut construite à l'endroit où un temple de Venus avait été démoli, ceci pour symboliser la dominance territoriale de l'Empire Romain Oriental récemment christianisé. Plusieurs siècles plus tard, Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik construisit le Dôme du Rocher sur le grand Haram al-Sharif (noble sanctuaire) pour faire concurrence à la Basilique du Saint-Sépulcre. Sa magnificence devait signaler aux Chrétiens comme aux Juifs l'arrivée de la loi Islamique. Plus récemment, l'Etat d'Israël a démontré qu'il contrôle la ville en modifiant l'accès à son site le plus sacré — le Mur des lamentations —, ceci en démolissant un quartier musulman et en le remplaçant par une grande place qui sert de lieu de réunion lors des fêtes religieuses mais aussi de cadre à des parades militaires et à des fêtes nationalistes. Le fait que le Dôme du Rocher et le Mur sont très proches l'un de l'autre crée toujours des tensions entre Juifs et Musulmans. Les planificateurs qui continuent de construire des structures religieuses à Jérusalem devront tenir compte du message politique transmis par ces structures car, dans cette ville, religion et politique sont étroitement liées.

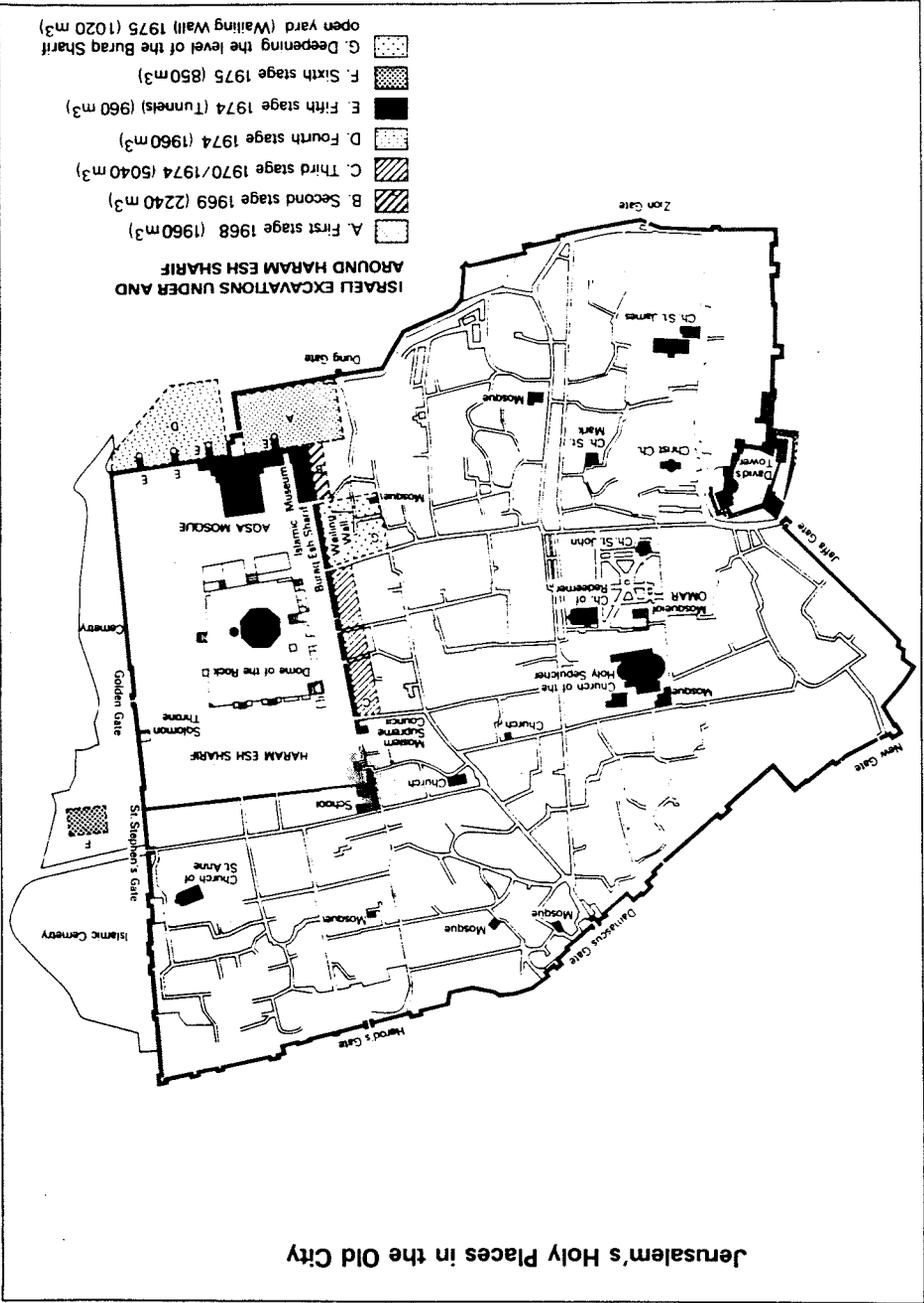


Fig. 1 The Old City of Jerusalem (Bin Talal 1979, 58).
La Vieille Ville de Jérusalem (Bin Talal 1979, 58).

1. Introduction

The landscape of Jerusalem, a holy city to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is first and foremost a religious landscape: a landscape of domes, steeples, minarets, walls, rocks, gardens, and pathways typifying to various groups of believers the holiness attributed to the land. Because the beginnings of each of the city's three dominant religions are associated at least in part with Jerusalem, the landscape is perforated with a variety of structures built to commemorate the divine processes and places which identify and validate the religions (Figure 1).

The religious landscape of Jerusalem, however, reflects more than just religion. Cosgrove (1984, 15) suggests that landscape is "an ideological concept" which "represents a way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves . . . and through which they have communicated their own social role and that of others with respect to external nature." The religious groups of Jerusalem have signified their religion and their respect for God through building and maintaining their holy places. However, these structures were not constructed just for religious worship and glory; they were also built to define the place and social role of each religious group.

Elaborating on this theme, Grabar (1973, 45) notes that "the rule of land or an area by a culture, or even the simple presence in a land of an alien or new element, is often expressed through some usually perceptible form." He then suggests that early Islamic monuments were used as a "visual symbolization" of the appearance of Islam not just as a religion, but also as a new political power. This means that, due to the most often inseparable nature of religion and politics, the religious structures of Jerusalem also communicate political messages. Peters (1986, 101) offers a similar view. He writes: "Each political possession and repossession of Jerusalem casts a new light on the special qualities of holy city and its primary shrine as well as on the nature of the ideological and geopolitical instruments that can be brought to bear to change its peculiar status in one direction or another."

These political manifestations in the religious landscape are the result of a variety of motives and methods. The major political motives behind the building of religious structures are to indicate political conquest or control of the city, to indicate a political presence or influence in the city, or to lend legitimacy to a political entity. Religious structures can also serve as symbols of political aspirations. The three general methods of landscape change include the construction, destruction, or modification of religious edifices.

By analyzing the motives and methods involved in the formation of the religious landscape of Jerusalem, as symbolized by its holy places, it is hoped to better understand the religious significance of the places, but also the more subtle and equally important political motives. An analysis of the political influences on the religious landscape is important in that it provides an additional means of trying to understand the complexities of three religious groups and their sub-groups cohabiting in one holy city. This broadened understanding can then help anticipate better the political implications of future modifications, changes, and additions to the religious landscape of Jerusalem.

2. The Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre

Rising from the centre of Jerusalem's Christian quarter is the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre (Church of the Resurrection to local Christian Arabs). The present day struc-

ture (Figure 2) serves primarily as a symbol of the enduring presence of the various Christian communities in the Holy Land. Currently, little political significance is attached to the church because Christianity's influence in the city has been much weakened. However, the original Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre were much more than just holy sites. An analysis of the history of the church reveals that Constantine built the original basilica to commemorate the site of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, but also to symbolize the advent of his Christian empire and its hegemony over pagan peoples.



Fig. 2 The Church of the Holy Sepulchre
L'Eglise du Saint-Sépulcre

Richard Krautheimer, in his article on the Constantine Basilica, explains that basilicas were designed originally as halls for large town gatherings, markets, judiciary sessions, reception halls for the wealthy, and as throne rooms in imperial palaces. He then suggests that basilicas were built throughout the Roman Empire to reflect the splendour of the divine ruler; they were used as a tool of "political-architectural propaganda", thus making the secular basilicas and the empire they represented "close to the realm of the state religion" (Krautheimer, 1967, 123).

By the fourth century churches had begun to take on the form of the secular basilicas. Krautheimer suggests that the religious structures were then used by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine as "a tool aimed at impressing on the Empire and its neighbours the power and splendour of the Christian God and his church." Constantine wanted these churches to be large and impressive, but built cheaply, with thin walls and timber roofs; the savings were to be spent more "profitably in terms of political propaganda on precious decorations and furnishings" (129). Krautheimer elaborates

further that the basilicas built during the reign of Constantine belong, like other basilicas, to the category of public monumental buildings which were "erected with the Emperor's financial and political support as part of a political program" (130). He concludes by describing the basilicas as expressing the "grandeur of the imperial founder and of the triumph of the religion he had taken under his protection" (140). Constantine also built his basilicas out of a desire to propagate the faith by building monumental structures. They would call attention to the new religion and contend with the monuments of ancient Rome. By placing large basilicas in the midst of his subjects, Constantine strengthened his ties with those to whom he looked for support (Doerries, 1972, 170).

The Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre was just one of many basilicas constructed throughout the Byzantine Empire during Constantine's reign. The basilica was built from 326 to 335 on the site where rival Rome had erected a statue to Jupiter and a temple to Venus (Hollis & Brownrigg, 1969). This act of destruction followed by construction symbolized the advent of a new empire's control of Jerusalem. However, its political importance went beyond just representing the dominance of a new religious empire. It commemorated the very acts which validated and symbolized Constantine's Christian empire. The church was built over the alleged site of Calvary, where Jesus was crucified and where Constantine's mother Helena discovered the true cross of Jesus. Crosses were not used in churches prior to Constantine's ascent to the throne, yet just one century later one Christian complained of a "horde of crosses". One explanation comes from a fifth century historian who wrote that Constantine "held the divine cross in great reverence" because during a battle in Rome "it had enabled him to subdue his enemies and because it appeared to him in a heavenly vision" (Doerries, 1972, 171).

In addition to being the symbol and inspiration for the victories of the empire, the cross has also been considered a sign used to strengthen the internal political stability of the empire by serving as a rallying point for its schismatic Christian communities (Wilson, 1903, 145). The cross then became a symbol of the Byzantine empire and its state religion. Since the symbol of the cross originated spiritually and physically at the location of the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, Constantine saw in the church a way to further legitimize his empire by strengthening its ties with the roots of Christianity and the symbolically and politically important cross.

Since Constantine's era the church has undergone significant changes, many of which were precipitated by political motives and rivalries. In 614, the non-Christian Persian rivals of the Byzantines destroyed most of the churches in the Holy Land, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to which they set fire. Muslim Arabs were kinder to the reconstructed church. In 638, conqueror Omar refused an invitation by the Patriarch to pray in the church for fear that devout followers would later insist that the church become a mosque. The Mosque of Omar now rises adjacent to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to commemorate the spot where Omar opted to pray. Muslim sentiments changed when the Fatimid dynasty of Egypt, under the leadership of Hakim, destroyed the church in 1009 (Murphy-O'Connor, 1986, 46). Later during that century, when Seljuk Turks captured the city, Christian Crusades were organized to liberate the Muslim controlled holy places. With their conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, the Crusaders embarked on building a new Church of the Holy Sepulchre no doubt to commemorate both holy happenings and a return of Christian sovereignty over Jerusalem. Christian sovereignty over the city, however, became a divisive issue as

rival Eastern and Western Christendom began a religious and political struggle for control of the holy place that is still on-going.

3. The Dome of the Rock

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is not the only manifestation in the religious landscape of Jerusalem with political underpinnings. Motives behind the construction of the beautiful Dome of the Rock may be both religious and political (Figure 3). The golden dome is built above a large rock which Islam considers the site of Mohammed's departure on his night journey into heaven. It is also believed to be the site of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of his son and of Solomon's and Herod's temples. While there are obvious links to religious events, Grabar notes that a small dome commemorating Mohammed's ascension had already been erected adjacent to the rock. This would have negated the need to build a larger one, unless of course a larger dome was to be more than just a deed of religious piety. Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik, who had the Dome of the Rock built between 688 and 691, left no record of his motives, thus leaving scholars to the realm of speculation on motives. The most frequently quoted political motive for constructing the dome is attributed to the Arab historian Yaqubi (who wrote around 874). He suggested that the caliph had the Dome built as an alternative place of pilgrimage to foil the attempts of counter Caliph Ibn al-Zubayr in Mecca who sought to gain control of the caliphate through control of the holy cities of Arabia. While this view seems to support Grabar's thesis of political motives for early Islamic construction, he refutes the idea on the basis that, historically, few pilgrimages were actually made to Jerusalem instead of Mecca. Further, the structure was not large enough for the circumambulations of any sizable gathering of pilgrims.

Grabar then proceeds to offer a new explanation for the construction of the dome, based on an analysis of three different features found within the interior of the monument. The most striking feature of the interior is the rock itself, filling the area directly under the dome. Grabar suggests that the rock was of religious significance to Judaism and Christianity as the site of temples and of Abraham's sacrifice. By building a structure over the rock dedicated to beliefs and prophets common to all three religions, Islam was able to associate itself as a continuation and final statement of the two religions of the book.

A second clue as to the reasons for building the dome can be found in the Byzantine and Sassanian (Persian) royal symbols of crowns and jewels used in the mosaics of the interior. Grabar sees these motifs as most likely being included in the interior design of the structure as a way of demonstrating to the unbelievers that they had been defeated and were now under the rule of a new empire.

The third and probably most forceful of Grabar's assertions is that the many interior inscriptions, mainly from Quranic texts, serve as a statement of Muslim universalism and as a proclamation to Jews and Christians of the final truth of Islam. The calligraphy inscriptions point to the special position of Muhammad and to the universality of his message. They stress the fundamental principles of Islam, and they define the position of Jesus and other prophets in the theology of the new faith. According to Grabar, "the inscriptions forcefully assert the power and strength of the new faith and the state based on it" (Grabar, 1973, 66).

The inscriptions, tiles, and the appropriation of the rock on the site of Mount Moriah, are viewed by Grabar as a way in which Abd al-Malik intentionally sought to

affirm the superiority and victory of Islam. It may also have been a way of inviting non-believers to embrace the new faith. The Dome of the Rock served as "a symbol of the conquering power or faith within the conquered land" and " (showed) the Jewish and especially the Christian worlds that the new faith was their successor in the possession of the one revealed religion and that its empire had taken over their holiest city" (Grabar, 1973, 67).

Grabar uses new and interesting evidence from the structure itself to understand some of the reasoning behind building the monument. However, he is certainly not the first to see the Dome of the Rock as a symbol of something other than a religious monument commemorating a holy site or a manifestation of the early political and religious rivalry with Mecca. Muqaddasi, an Arab geographer from Jerusalem, wrote in 985 that the large and beautiful Umayyad mosque in Damascus was built to prevent Muslims from turning toward the many wonderful churches existing in Syria. He then explains that Abd al-Malik,

"noting the greatness of the Dome of Al-Kumamah [Church of the Holy Sepulchre] and its magnificence, was moved lest it should dazzle the minds of the Muslims, and hence erected above the Rock, the Dome which is now seen there" (quoted in Simpson 1889, 15).

Murphy-O'Connor (1986, 78) adds that the structure was intended to instil a sense of pride in the Arab Muslims who, up until then, had been in awe of the magnificent Christian churches. He notes that the Byzantine Christians would organize tours of their churches for the desert Arabs "who tended to equate splendour and power."

This idea of religious rivalry and competition between Islam and Christianity through their monuments is also suggested by Simpson in his comparison of the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. He compares the two structures, noting that both are built over a rock with a cave, both are considered to be the centre of the world, and both have domes over a rock which are supported by twelve symbolic columns. Based on these similarities, he suggests that the Dome of the Rock was constructed using features similar to those of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in order that the new Islamic edifice would serve as a "rival dome to eclipse the other" (Simpson, 1889, 16).

Unlike the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Dome of the Rock has never been subjected to destruction with the coming of new empires and states of differing religions. The Knights Templar of the Crusades christened a modified Dome of the Rock as their *Templum Domini* while the British, shortly after their conquest of Jerusalem in 1917, set out to restore the structure which had fallen into a sad state of disrepair. When Israel captured East Jerusalem in 1967, paratroopers hoisted an Israeli flag on the captured Temple Mount, but shortly thereafter the government returned the area known in Islam as the Haram al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary) to Muslim control.

Currently the Dome of the Rock sits at the centre of two different political rivalries: Jordanian-Saudi and Israeli-Palestinian. The least volatile of the disputes is the current one between the Kingdoms of Jordan and Saudi Arabia over who should finance the restoration of the dome. Both countries see the opportunity as a way to validate their control over Islam's third most holy site. The Hashimites of Jordan, once the guardians of the holy places in Mecca and Medina which are now under Saudi control, want to ensure that they maintain their position as guardian of Jerusalem's Islamic shrines. When King Fahd of Saudi Arabia announced that he was donating nine mil-

lion dollars to UNESCO to replace the leaking gold-tinted aluminium dome with a gold-plated one of brass, Jordan's Hussein saw it as a threat to political influence in the city Jordan once governed. With a much weakened economy, Hussein countered the offer by selling his London home and using the revenues to renovate the dome and thereby maintain Jordan's control of the holy places (*Christian Science Monitor*, 29 May 1992, *New York Times*, 9 September 1992).

More problematic is the fact that the Dome of the Rock sits at the centre of a piece of territory claimed as holy by both Muslims and Jews (Fig. 3). For the Palestinians, the Dome of the Rock and its surrounding Haram al-Sharif have emerged as the predominant symbols of their struggle for an independent state. Throughout the Palestinian Arab community in Israel, the Occupied Territories, and the Diaspora, copies of the Dome of the Rock are prominently displayed in homes, shops, and offices. For example, in the Israeli Arab town of Nazareth merchants display posters of the Dome of the Rock on the walls of their restaurants and shops, while home owners in increasing numbers have fastened images of the monument above the entrance to their homes (Emmett, 1991, 296). For some Israelis, Islamic control of what Jews refer to as the Temple Mount symbolizes Israel's lack of total sovereignty over the holy city. Israeli excavations around the Haram al-Sharif are perceived by Palestinians as an attempt by Israel to weaken Islamic control of the area (Figure 1). More problematic is the fact that since 1967 there have been several attempts to harm the mosques of the Temple Mount. The most serious attempt was in 1984, when a plot to destroy the Dome of the Rock was uncovered. During the trial, one of the Jewish instigators justified the plan of destruction by demanding that the Temple Mount come under Jewish control as a "focal point of our sovereignty", and that it should be "turned into the central place, radiating holiness and strength to the entire country and all the Jewish people" (Benvenisti, 1986, 44).



Fig. 3 The Dome of the Rock with surrounding Haram al-Sharif
Le Dôme du Rocher entouré d'Haram al-Sharif

4. Other Religious Monuments

The empires that built the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as means politically to proclaim and maintain their empires have long since retreated into the pages of history. Yet, the religious landscape of Jerusalem is still evolving as new states seek to justify and strengthen their political claim to the city and its holy places by manipulating the religious landscape. Throughout the waning days of the Ottoman Empire (whose main contribution to the landscape of Jerusalem was rebuilding the walls), numerous European states sought to strengthen their ties to the strategically important Middle East and to proclaim a presence in the Holy Land by gaining or maintaining access to the holy places and by building new religious monuments in Jerusalem. Both France and Russia, as self proclaimed guardians of the Latin (Roman Catholic) and Greek Orthodox churches respectively, considered their involvement with the holy places as more than just a religious duty. They saw their influence in the land as a political statement of power and greatness similar to the messages intended by Constantine and Abd al-Malik through his involvement. So great was the political importance attributed to the religious monuments that one of the causes of the Crimean War stems from the Latin and Orthodox dispute over a missing star placed to mark the site of Jesus' birth in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. This dispute was then taken over by France and Russia, as guardian powers, who carried these contentions on to the European battlefields.

Additional manifestations on the religious landscape came during the later years of the nineteenth century. Great Britain, France, Germany, and Russia sought to proclaim a presence in the land by building churches on or near holy sites such as the Russian Church of St. Mary Magdalen, with its seven gold, onion-shaped cupolas, located near Gethsemane and the imposing German built Church of the Dormition on Mt. Zion. Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany journeyed to Jerusalem for the dedication of the German Lutheran Church of the Redeemer (located near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre) in 1898 and received a royal welcome from his Ottoman allies who had torn down part of the city wall near Jaffa Gate in order that the Kaiser could enter the city on horseback (Ben-Arieh, 1984). While these structures did not have the same political significance as the other monuments, they nonetheless were used by political entities as a symbol of power and of presence, but not dominance, in the land.

5. The Western Wall

The most recent politically motivated modification to the religious landscape of Jerusalem came in 1967 and involved Judaism's holiest site, the Western or Wailing Wall (Figure 4). The Western Wall is part of the retaining wall built in 20 BC by King Herod to support the expansive Temple Mount. So complete was Rome's destruction of Herod's temple in 70 AD that the only structure to remain from the complex was its retaining wall. Since its destruction and with the construction of the Islamic Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount, Jews in Jerusalem have gathered below, at the exposed Western portion of the retaining wall, to pray and to lament the destruction of the temple. For centuries, this portion of the wall was reached via a narrow lane through a Muslim neighbourhood of Arabs from North Africa's Maghreb region. The area in front of the wall would only accommodate a limited number of Jews, due to its restrictive size (about four meters wide by twenty-eight meters long). During the later years of Ottoman and then British rule, several attempts were made by

the local Jewish community to make the wall area more accessible. These attempts were thwarted, due in part to protests and violence incurred by the local Muslim community and because the changes violated the long standing status quo over the holy places. During the Ottoman and British eras regulations had been formulated with respect to the control of the holy sites in order to maintain peace among competing religions and sects. From 1948 and until 1967, during Jordanian control of Jerusalem, Israeli Jews were prevented from visiting the holy place.

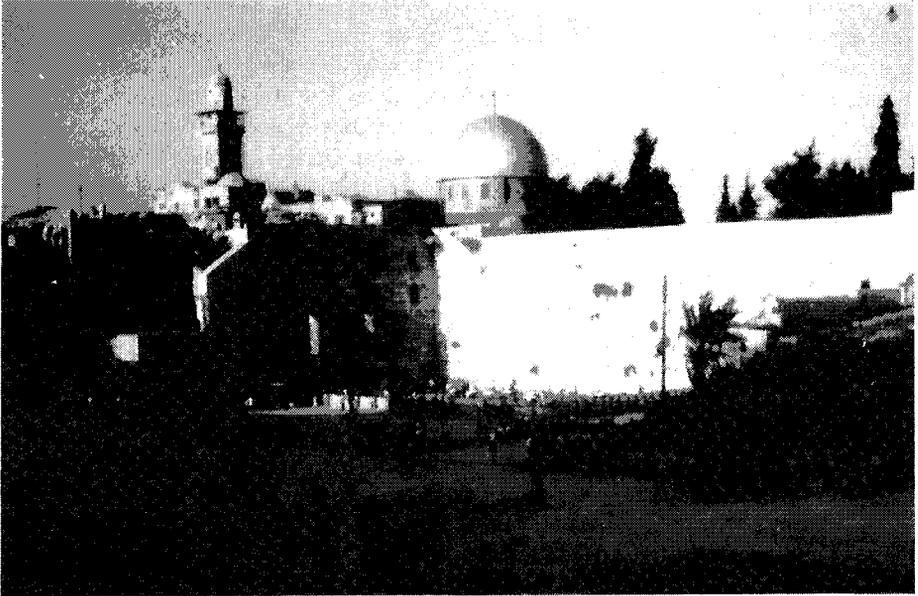


Fig. 4 The Western Wall and plaza with the Dome of the Rock above.

Le Mur des lamentations et sa place, surmonté du Dôme du Rocher.

When Israel gained control of East Jerusalem on June 7, 1967, the government recognized that the status of the wall would have to change in order to accommodate all those wanting to visit the wall. Three days later on the evening of June 10, with the war just coming to an end, the Israeli government under the direction of the Minister of Defense and the Mayor of Jerusalem approved the demolition of part of the Maghrabi Quarter surrounding the wall. The hasty demolition, in which Arab families were given three hours to evacuate, got out of control and moved beyond the central alleyway of the quarter which was to serve as the limit of the enlarged area. By morning the demolished area to the west of the wall covered more than one acre and 108 families comprising 619 individuals were without homes.

The reasons for demolishing the quarter and replacing it with an expansive plaza (Figure 5) in front of the wall are most often associated with the sanctity of the site and the necessity for guaranteeing access and security for all Jews desiring to go to the wall. Meron Benvenisti, who served as deputy mayor of Jerusalem during the time of demolition, adds to the practical considerations an irrational impulse by viewing the action as "the settling of an historic account with those who had harassed the Jewish

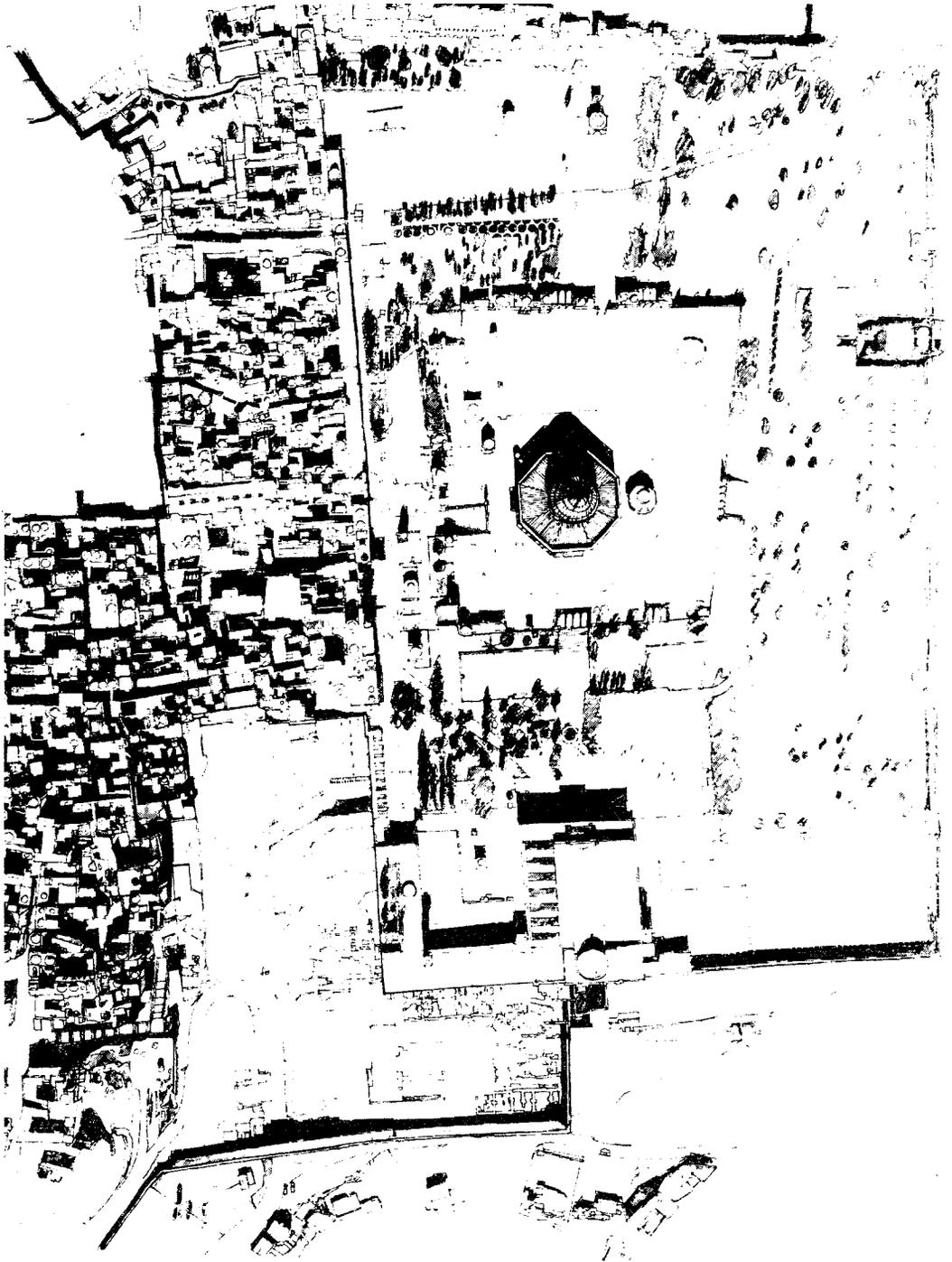


Fig. 5 The Dome of the Rock and surrounding Haram al-Sharif with the Western Wall Plaza to the southwest (Kutcher 1973).

Le Dôme du Rocher entouré d'Haram al-Sharif, avec la place du Mur des lamentations au sud-ouest (Kutcher 1973).

people over the centuries, ..." (Benvenisti, 1976, 307). This suggests that there was more to the expansion at the wall than just access for religious worshippers. While the evidence may not be as convincing as with other religious structures, it seems that the Israeli policy at the Western Wall could also be viewed as an expression of political control and possession of the holy sites of Jerusalem in much the same way that Constantine and Abd al-Malik had sought to express political control of their Christian and Islamic empires over the holy city through religious monuments.

This mix of religion and politics at the wall (known in Hebrew as the Kotel) continues to this day, as evidenced by the unique blend of sacred, social, and political activities in the large plaza. In addition to prayers, bar mitzvahs, and Sabbath services, the plaza is used as a site for political demonstrations, induction ceremonies for Israeli soldiers, closing ceremonies of the Maccabiah games, and celebrations held on Jerusalem Day to commemorate the unification of the city in 1967. That the Western Wall serves as more than just a religious site is noted and accepted by Jerusalem Rabbi Ze'ev Gotthold. He suggests that the "Kotel is appropriate for demonstrations and all kinds of secular ceremonies, as a rally point for the highest expression of the Jewish national-fraternal sentiment" (*Jerusalem Post* 21 July 1989). The Western Wall clearly stands as a symbol of not only the Jewish religion but also the Jewish state.

6. Settlements and Centres

The process of landscape transformation, with its political manifestations, continues as religious groups, both old and new, seek to establish an identity and to proclaim a presence in the land. If Zionism can be categorized as a quasi-religion, based on Sopher's (1967, 112) definition of nationalism as a quasi-religion, then the ring of fortress-like housing settlements ringing the annexed Arab neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem can be viewed both as housing for a growing Jewish population wanting to live on the sacred soil of the homeland, and as a political manifestation of Zionism (viewed here as a religious entity separate from Judaism) seeking to symbolize a presence once again in the land. The housing projects are constructed as contemporary religious monuments based on a zeal for the Zionist ideal and as a visible statement of political control.

Part of the Brigham Young University (owned and operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or Mormon Church) is also located on Arab land in East Jerusalem. Its Jerusalem Centre sits on Mt. Scopus just below Hebrew University and the German built Augusta Victoria hospital. The centre was completed in 1987 as an educational centre for BYU students and as a religious centre for Mormons living in Israel. However, in a city steeped in political and religious intrigue, the centre has found itself caught in the middle of politics. Many Orthodox Jews view the new addition to Jerusalem's landscape as a centre for missionary activity and therefore a religious threat to the existence of the Jewish faith, which translates into a political threat to the existence of a Jewish state. The intense opposition by a very vocal minority prompted a heated debate in the Israeli Parliament (Knesset), followed by an easily defeated no-confidence motion. In the United States, Mormons called on political allies in the likes of former President Ford and members of Congress to pressure Israel into granting approval for the centre. Political allies in Israel have included Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek and many Knesset members (*Salt Lake Tribune* 25 December 1985). Israeli officials were reticent to stop the project for fear of antagonizing Mormons in the United States, who have been perceived as being

"rather pro-Israel in their political orientation" (*Jerusalem Post* 27 December 1985). In order to appease opponents to the centre, Mormon Church leaders signed agreements which prohibit proselytizing by Mormons in Israel.

Had the centre been built in a less conspicuous location, perhaps such opposition may have never occurred. In fact it was not until the completion of most of the centre's eight terraced levels looking down on the Old City of Jerusalem that Orthodox Jews took notice of the centre and started to oppose its completion. As with the building of other religious structures in Jerusalem, the Mormon Church viewed the prime location, size, and structure, with its many Jerusalem arches of limestone, as a way to make its presence known in the land. It was not to be a presence as a ruling power, but nevertheless a visible presence with more than just religious motives.

7. Conclusion

The on-going evolution of Jerusalem's religious landscape reveals much about the political history of the city. The initial construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Dome of the Rock symbolized the advent of new religious-political empires in the region, while Muslim Fatimid destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Crusader modification of the Dome of the Rock signified the subjugation of one religion over the other. Likewise, the modification of access to the Western Wall through the destruction of a Muslim residential quarter meant for the defeated Palestinians that Israel now controlled all of the holy city. With the resulting loss of sovereignty over Jerusalem, Palestinians have turned the Dome of the Rock into a symbol of political aspirations for a Palestinian state. Protestant churches scattered throughout the city are not associated with political control, but rather act as a symbol, more past than present, of political influence and presence.

Recognizing the existence of political influences on the religious landscape and understanding the complex relationship of the two factors are important in anticipating future transformations in the landscape, whether they be new structures or changes in the old. Had Abd al-Malik asserted control of Jerusalem by converting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre into an Islamic shrine. The Crusades might have begun several centuries earlier. If Israel had assumed control of the Temple Mount as a sign of its rule over a united city, the verbal war between Israel and most of the Islamic world may have become an intense physical war as Muslims would have fought to regain control of the holy Haram al-Sharif. By understanding the political and religious significance of religious structures in the Holy City, certain leaders have been able to prevent some contention over control of the land. An evaluation of the religious landscape of Jerusalem is thus useful not only in understanding reasons from the past, but also in understanding options for the future.

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