

## Between the Temple Mount/*Haram el-Sharīf* and the Holy Sepulchre: Archaeological Involvement in Jerusalem's Holy Places

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### Abstract

*Archaeological involvement in the holy places of Jerusalem has become a focus of professional and public concern during recent years. The two sacred areas of the Temple Mount and the Holy Sepulchre combine their role as historical and architectural monuments of supreme importance with their daily use as central religious sites. The connection between scholars, mainly archaeologists and architects, who studied these monuments, and the local religious authorities in charge of the holy sites has accompanied research on Jerusalem since the mid-nineteenth century. The main issues to be analyzed in this paper are related to the ways archaeologists and other scholars are involved with the major holy sites of Jerusalem: how the 'owners' of the Temple Mount and the Holy Sepulchre viewed these scholars and their research; to what degree they were prepared to cooperate with them; what their motives were for doing so and how archaeologists and other researchers operated and adhered to scholarly interests in such complex sites. The Jerusalem case study is used to investigate the larger scope of interrelations between the academic world and the religious 'owners' of holy sites in other locations.*

Keywords: Jerusalem, religion and nationalism, holy places, site ownership, public archaeology

### Introduction

The connection between scholars and religious authorities has accompanied modern research in Jerusalem since the mid-nineteenth century, but only recently has archaeological involvement in the holy sites of the city become a focus of professional and public concern. The place of archaeology has been central to the political and public debate between Israelis and Palestinians over the ownership of the Temple Mount/*Haram el-Sharīf*, particularly in the context of the future political settlement of the Jerusalem issue (Klein 2003). At the same time, issues related to the archaeological protection of these ancient monuments have been aggravated following the destruction of archaeological layers in the course of con-

struction works carried out by the Islamic religious authorities (*Waqf*) at the site (Berkovitz 2000; 2001; Avni and Seligman 2001; Klein 2003: 97-99). At the Holy Sepulchre the archaeological and architectural study of the monument has formed the background for the complex issues of the physical division of the church between the communities and their rights within the holy site. The two sacred areas are characterized by being both historical and architectural monuments of supreme importance, as well as central religious sites that are used on a daily basis.

The holy sites of Jerusalem represent one of the most complicated cases of scholarly involvement in the debate concerning the religious and national possession of major

historical monuments, which raises several fundamental questions regarding the attitude contemporary religious groups hold about the past. In a wider scope, the study of archaeological exploration of holy sites can be used as a tool for understanding the perception of the past among religious and ethnic groups in other locations around the globe. Recent academic discussions on the meaning of the past in the collective memory of contemporary societies (e.g. Lowenthal 1985; Nora 1989; Fowler 1995; Shama 1996; Alcock 2002) do not pay special attention to major religious and sacred sites. The impact of such sites on religious movements has recently become a focus of scholarly attention (e.g. Carmichael *et al.* 1994; Arbel 2005 and references therein). As most of these sites are located within ancient monuments, they are also the focus of archaeological research. While the study of nationalism and archaeology has been one of the most hotly debated topics of the last decade (e.g. Trigger 1984; Silberman 1989; Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Kohl 1998; Meskell 1998; Abu El-Haj 2001; Kane 2003), the role of archaeology in providing 'evidence' for a real or presumed connection between a modern religious movement and its ethnic or religious roots has been somewhat neglected.

Examining the attitude of different religious groups to the sites they possess or claim is one of the most feasible ways to understand their attitude to the physical manifestation of their 'roots' or collective memory. By reviewing the relationships formed between scholars involved in the study of the holy sites in Jerusalem and the leaders of the different religious communities, we will try to define the differing perceptions of the past within modern religious establishments.

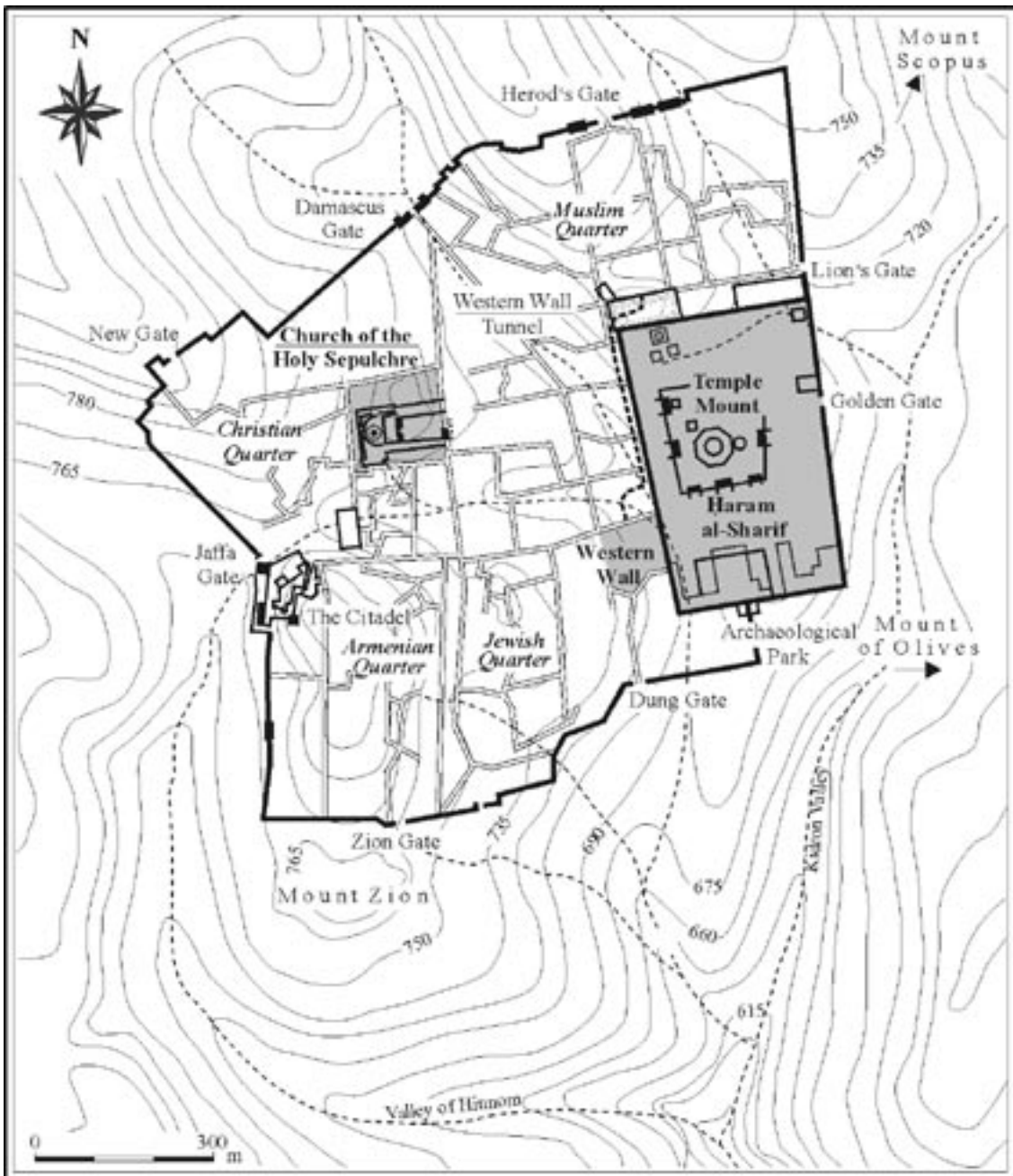
One of the primary questions related to the condensed religious surroundings of most sacred monuments that rely on ancient remains is the role of the professional archaeologist, architect or art historian in interpreting the

site. To what extent are the data provided by the researcher and his/her interpretation being manipulated in order that the religious group involved will get its required benefits?

We address these questions from the perspective of the involvement of scholars, representatives of academic and governmental institutions, specifically considering the two main religious shrines of Jerusalem: the Temple Mount/*Haram el-Sharif* and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Figure 1). We attempt to assess the connection between scholars who have studied these two monuments and the religious communities who run the holy sites, serving a large number of believers. The main questions analysed are how the involvement of archaeologists and other scholars was defined: how the 'owners' viewed these researchers and their work, to what degree they were prepared to cooperate with them, what their motives were for doing so and how the researchers operated and adhered to scholarly interests in such complex sites.

During the last 150 years archaeologists, architects and art historians have been active in research on and conservation of the two religious monuments. Complicated relationships have developed between the scholarly and academic communities, and governmental institutions, on the one hand, and the representatives of the holy sites, the owners, on the other—the *Waqf* on the Temple Mount/*Haram es-Sharif*, and the leaders of the Christian communities in the Holy Sepulchre. The reason for scholarly interest is clear, not least that these sites are among the most important centres of religious worship in the Holy Land and the focus of large-scale pilgrimage involving three major faiths. The Temple Mount and the Holy Sepulchre were also the focus of urban development in the city of Jerusalem throughout much of its history, thus further attracting scholarly interest.

In opposition to the desires of various scholars to collect every item of data at the two sites



**Figure 1.** Map of the Old City of Jerusalem. The Temple Mount/Haram el-Sharif and Holy Sepulchre compounds are indicated. To the west of the Temple mount is the Wailing Wall and the ‘Western Wall Tunnels’. The Temple Mount platform and its monuments are under *Waqf* control and the Wailing Wall and ‘Western Wall Tunnels’ are under Israeli religious authorities control. The large excavation area to the south and southwest of the Temple Mount was developed in recent years as an open air archaeological park (Jerusalem Archaeological Park).

stood the religious complexity that severely limited the possibilities to conduct proper academic research. Because both sites operated as central active places of worship and were maintained by religious authorities, large-scale archaeological excavations were not possible. In spite of this, detailed archaeological and architectural surveys and documentation studies have been conducted at both sites. From time to time it was possible for archaeologists to conduct limited excavations where renovations or repairs were required following earth tremors or various kinds of development.

### Archaeological Research at the Temple Mount/*Haram el-Sharīf* (Figure 2)

Modern archaeological research at the Temple Mount began in the mid-nineteenth century

with the easing of access restrictions for western travellers and scholars. Up to that time non-Muslims were banned from entry to the sacred enclosure, and information was based on observation from the surrounding buildings. Only a few intrepid explorers and travellers actually visited the Mount and documented some of its elements, although their descriptions were general in nature and did not include the underground spaces.

The situation changed after the Crimean War. Beginning in the late 1850s, western scholars were allowed to visit the Temple Mount in return for payment, the Muslim authorities turning a blind eye to activities documenting the enclosure and its underground spaces. The first scholars who wrote about the Mount and associated underground areas in detail were James Thomas Barclay



**Figure 2.** The Temple Mount/*Haram el-Sharīf*—aerial view from the southwest. The massive early Roman period walls of the compound delimit the area of the sanctuary. The main early Islamic monuments are located at the centre of the enclosure (the Dome of the Rock) and at its southern part (the *al-Aqsā* mosque). To the west of the Haram wall is the Western Wall plaza and the ‘Western Wall Tunnels’, and to the south and southwest are the large archaeological excavation areas.

(1858), Ermete Pierotti (1864) and Marquis Charles Jen Melchoir de Vogüé (1864).

The most comprehensive documentation of the Temple Mount, however, was prepared between 1864–75 by British scholars working for the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF): Sir Charles William Wilson in 1864–65, Sir Charles Warren in 1867–70 and Conrad Schick in 1872–75 (Wilson 1865; Warren 1884; Morrison 1871; Schick 1887; and see Gibson and Jacobson 1996 for an updated compilation of nineteenth-century archaeological research at the site). All these activities took place with the knowledge and permission of the Ottoman authorities. Nevertheless guards and Muslim religious functionaries on the Mount occasionally interfered with these scholars' work. This nineteenth-century work is still the main basis for information concerning the Temple Mount and its underground structures (Figure 3).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of attempts were made to conduct studies and excavations, especially in the Mount's underground spaces. The best known was that of the British noble Montague Brownlow Parker in 1909–10, with the aim of finding the Ark of the Covenant and the Solomonic temple treasures. After some ineffectual excavations in the City of David, the expedition conducted illicit excavations in the Temple Mount, only to be discovered by the Muslim authorities which led to a scrambled escape from Jerusalem (Dalman 1912; Silberman 1982: 180–88). Although claimed to be a scientific expedition, this was in fact a treasure-hunting venture. The only archaeological value of the work was the detailed documentation conducted by the prominent archaeologist and Dominican priest Fr. L.H. Vincent (1911) who accompanied the expedition and documented its finds.

During the British rule of Palestine (1918–48), two comprehensive studies were executed, focusing on the Dome of the Rock and the *al-Aqsā* Mosque. E.T. Richmond (1924) pub-

lished the results of an extensive survey of the Dome of the Rock, carried out in 1918. In 1938–42, R.W. Hamilton, then the Director of the Department of Antiquities, documented the *al-Aqsā* Mosque and conducted limited excavations in the building while extensive repairs were underway as a consequence of the 1927 earthquake (Hamilton 1949). These engineering-cum-architectural studies resulted from the necessity for a report on the structural stability of the monuments, due to the fear of collapse from weakened foundations, an outcome of years of neglect and as a result of the tremor.

In the 1920s, K.A.C. Creswell compiled a detailed study of the structures of the Temple Mount, including many drawings and photographs, some of which were published in his monumental book on Early Muslim Architecture (Creswell 1969). At the same time M. van Berchem (1927) documented and published dozens of ancient inscriptions discovered on the Temple Mount and in the surrounding buildings.

During Jordanian rule in East Jerusalem (1948–67), limited archaeological work was conducted at the site and its surroundings. A detailed survey of the art and architecture of the Dome of the Rock was carried out by O. Grabar, but only published decades later (Grabar 1996). K. Kenyon, who conducted large-scale excavations in Jerusalem (Kenyon 1967), devoted no attention to the exploration of the Temple Mount compound, except for digging several probes near its southern wall.

Over the last forty years, a significant contribution has been made to the documentation of the Islamic monuments at the site. Fuller understanding of the Byzantine, Umayyad and Abbasid periods was provided by the extensive research of the site and its sources in A. Kaplony's (2002) monumental study. A survey of the Mamluke and Ottoman buildings on the *Haram* had been conducted as a joint effort of the British School of Archaeology in

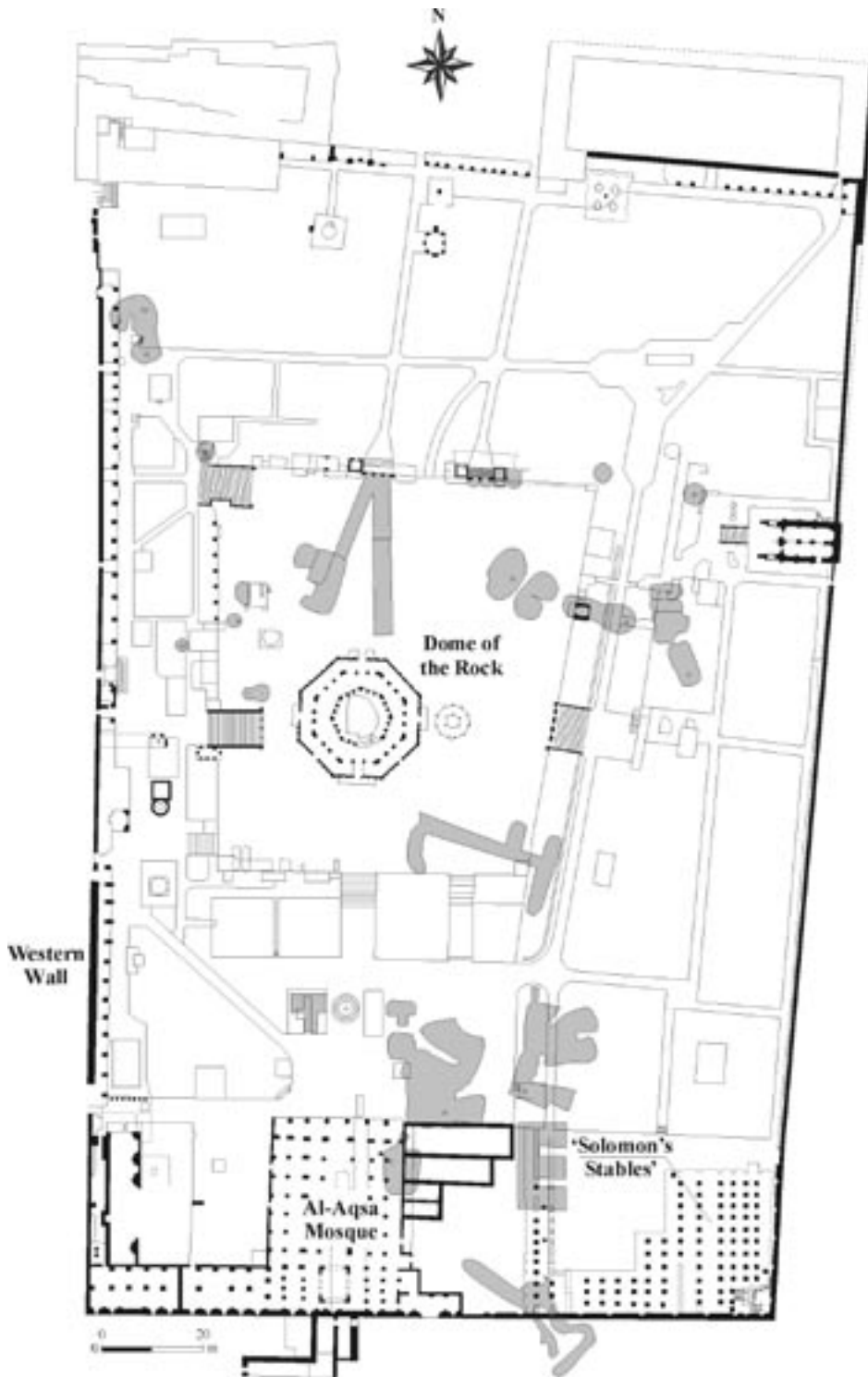


Figure 3. Plan of the Temple Mount platform, including the main existing monuments and the underground man made cavities, indicated by the grey shading.

Jerusalem and the archaeological department of the *Waqf* (Burgoyne 1987; Natsheh 2000). Additional research was conducted on ancient architectural fragments scattered in the *Haram* platform (Wilkinson 1987). Israeli scholars also contributed to the documentation of the Early Islamic monuments on the Temple Mount (e.g. Ben Dov 1982; Rosen-Ayalon 1989). At the same time extensive excavations were conducted for the first time to the south and west of the Temple Mount enclosure, revealing impressive remains from both the Roman and the Early Islamic periods (B. Mazar 1975; Ben Dov 1982; Reich and Bilig 2000; E. Mazar 2003).

The contribution of these studies to our knowledge of the sacred enclosure structure, its history and development, has been considerable. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that due to the religious importance and sensitivities of the site, no proper scientific, archaeological excavation has ever been conducted at the site, save for limited work during the *al-Aqsā* repairs in the British mandate period (Hamilton 1949). The desire of archaeologists to excavate this major monument of ancient Jerusalem was only partly fulfilled with the large scale archaeological excavations near the western and southern walls of the compound.

### Archaeologists and the Muslim Religious Authorities—Patterns of Connection

How were these scientific studies of the sacred enclosure received by the Muslim religious authorities, the *Waqf*, in charge of the day-to-day running of the site? The sources available for analysis are mainly the reminiscences of the scholars themselves, who often suffered from the suspicions and even interference of the believers. From the early stages of research, the PEF explorers were received with distrust and even animosity during their work in the underground chambers of the Temple Mount (e.g.

Warren 1876). It seems that this suspicion of western scholarship grew with the secretive and at the same time farcical actions of the Parker expedition on the Temple Mount (Dalman 1912; Silberman 1982: 180-88).

The attitude of the Muslim *Waqf* towards scholars, and particularly archaeologists, is demonstrated by both their formal and informal relations with the official archaeological authorities and with individual researches. As a rule, a consistent reticence by the religious circles of the *Waqf* to the research of external archaeologists and architects may be observed from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. This reservation grew throughout the twentieth century, during the times of the British mandate, Jordanian rule and into Israeli control. Parts of the religious Muslim establishment saw the study of the sacred enclosure by western scholars not as academic inquiry on the historical development of the site and the archaeological remains it contained, but rather as an attempt to undermine the central status of the Islamic monuments of the site—the Dome of the Rock and the *al-Aqsā* Mosque. On the other hand, together with their suspicions of foreign scholars, the *Waqf* was willing to cooperate unofficially with governmental and foreign conservation bodies that concerned themselves with the preservation of the Islamic monuments at the site.

During the British Mandate period, a wide range of professional contacts was developed between *Waqf* officials and archaeologists from the mandatory Department of Antiquities (Avni and Seligman 2001:11-22). Shortly after the British occupation of Jerusalem in December 1917 it became clear that the historic monuments on the Temple Mount/Haram el-Sharif were in a very poor physical state, owing to continual neglect in the last phase of the Ottoman rule. Immediately after the British had set up their military government in Jerusalem, the first formal contacts were made between the authorities and the *Waqf*. Professional

contacts were maintained between the mandatory Department of Antiquities and the professional administration of the *Waqf*. Inspectors working for the Department of Antiquities had free access to almost every place on the Temple Mount, and they were allowed to record, measure and photograph its major monuments. Documentation and surveys of the monuments in the *Haram* were conducted for preservation purposes (Richmond 1924; Hamilton 1949). Such professional activities were recognised by the *Waqf* and promoted good working relations between the functionaries of both sides. These special relationships were maintained by the directors of the Department of Antiquities, who took a personal and active role in the documentation work (e.g. Hamilton 1949; and see Avni and Seligman 2001: 14-20).

This system of chiefly professional contacts was not backed up by any legal authority of the mandatory Government of Palestine, because according to law the Temple Mount was a recognized holy place and therefore subject to certain restrictions on the jurisdiction of the civil authorities, including those of the Department of Antiquities.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, throughout the years of the British rule, the professional relations between governmental authorities and the Muslim religious authorities were good, and the *Waqf* was generally willing to cooperate in professional matters with the Department of Antiquities or with other government agencies, such as the Public Works Department (PWD), government officials, scholars and the High Commissioner himself.

In parallel to the activities of the Department of Antiquities, the *Waqf* established a Technical Department with the aim of maintaining the monuments of the *Haram el-Sharif*. One of the first actions undertaken by this department was the preparation of a plan to treat the ceramic tiles adorning the Dome of the Rock. With time the Technical Department developed its own archaeological and architectural

unit, and became an organ that documented and studied the monuments in the field of conservation, often in cooperation with recognized international institutions. Thus the Islamic religious authorities formally recognized the need to conduct professional research and conservation within the sacred enclosure.

The ongoing professional contacts between the *Waqf* and the official archaeological and architectural organs of the Mandatory government continued until the end of British rule on Palestine. Surveys and documentation works in the *Haram* area were conducted through the 1940s as a joint effort of the Department of Antiquities and the *Waqf* (Avni and Seligman 2001: 20-21).

The period of Jordanian rule (1948–67) is only partially represented in the archives of the Department of Antiquities. A typical example of the tangible relationships between the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and the *Waqf* is demonstrated by a seemingly small incident in 1953, where documentation was required following the collapse of part of the mosaic covering the walls of the Dome of the Rock. In a letter sent by the director of the Department of Antiquities, G. Lancaster-Harding to the renowned expert on Muslim architecture, Prof. K.A.C. Creswell, the former notes the poor state of the mosaics, which were peeling off the walls. Responding to Creswell's request to erect scaffolding so that the mosaics could be examined, Lancaster-Harding observed, 'By the law I have no control over any religious buildings which are actually in use, but I might be able to pull a few strings.' The issue was passed to the local antiquities inspector Yusef Sa'ad to handle the case and make contact with the *Waqf*. In a series of letters Sa'ad asks the *Waqf* to close the western door of the Dome of the Rock for three hours to enable photography and documentation. In a curt reply the *Waqf* officials refused the request, explaining that it was unwilling for worshipers to be disturbed by photography (Avni and Seligman 2001: 23).



Following the 1967 war, Israeli law was imposed upon East Jerusalem, and the entire Temple Mount was declared to be part of the antiquities site consisting of the Old City and its surroundings.<sup>2</sup> Several days after the war, special arrangements were made for the administration of the Temple Mount area. Under the instructions of the Israeli Defense Minister, Moshe Dayan, the *Waqf* was granted full civilian authority in the enclosure, while responsibility for security affairs were invested with the Israel Police (Shragai 1995: 18-27; Gorenberg 2000; Ramon 2001). The Muslim religious authorities, on their side, did not recognize Israeli rule in east Jerusalem and considered it to be occupied territory, on which international laws and UN conventions should be imposed. For this reason no formal contacts between the *Waqf* and the Israeli Department of Antiquities were formed, and all professional relationships were maintained only at the personal level.

For the first twenty years of Israeli rule in east Jerusalem, the Israeli Department of Antiquities maintained limited professional contacts with the *Waqf* in matters concerning the preservation of the monuments at the *Haram*. From time to time departmental inspectors would visit the site, sometimes accompanied by police officers or governmental representatives. On occasion, mainly when the *Waqf* was engaged in construction or earth-moving operations on the Mount, questions arose concerning archaeological supervision and prevention of damage to antiquities; such questions frequently had to be settled at the political level.<sup>3</sup>

During this period, and in particular from the mid-1980s onward, good informal relationships were established between archaeologists of the Department of Antiquities (renamed from 1990 the Israel Antiquities Authority [IAA]) and the professional staff of the Technical Department of the *Waqf*, mainly the engineers and architects responsible for development

and maintenance work on the site. These unofficial professional relationships included regular meetings, during which information was received and updated, and opinions were exchanged about activities on the Mount. In the course of these conversations, the *Waqf* staff gave the IAA representatives advance notice of planned activities, such as extensive repairs to the Dome of the Rock and renovations planned at the underground vaults in the south east corner of the Temple Mount platform, known as 'Solomon's Stables'. The IAA representatives, for their part, showed the *Waqf* staff their plans for excavation south of the Temple Mount and for developing this area as an archaeological park.

As these contacts were maintained unofficially, the *Waqf* consistently declined to inform Israeli authorities, in an official capacity, of their plans for construction and development on the *Haram* enclosure.

Beginning in the 1980s, a constant legal pressure was applied by Israeli Jewish ultra-national and religious movements, aiming towards full imposition of Israeli Law on the Temple Mount enclosure. Israeli civil authorities, including the IAA, were blamed for neglecting their legal duties at the site which had led to the destruction of antiquities by the Muslim religious authorities. Following several petitions made by these religious national movements to the Israeli Supreme court, the government Attorney General composed a new directive for the governmental and professional organizations that reviewed the authority and the *modus operandi* of government agencies operating on the Mount (Shragai 1995: 94-95; Berkovitz 2000: 299-306; Avni and Seligman 2001: 27-29). In accordance with these directives the IAA was instructed to conduct regular tours of inspection on the Temple Mount, to monitor works of construction, development and conservation and to submit reports of these inspections to the Attorney General (Avni and Seligman 2001: 27-38).

It should be noted that works conducted at this time on the Mount, under the direction of the Technical Department of the *Waqf*, generally adhered to universally accepted principles and rules for the treatment of historical monuments, with the cooperation and supervision of international professional agencies. Thus differences of opinion on professional matters between the IAA archaeologists and conservators and the *Waqf* officials were almost non-existent.

Notable in this context are the extensive renovation and conservation works conducted by an Irish contractor in 1992–94 on the Dome of the Rock, during which large portions of the dome were replaced. The work, including an extensive conservation survey of the existing dome, was ordered by the *Waqf* and involved many foreign experts who conducted their work over many months inside the Temple Mount. During this time, Israeli professionals were granted permission to visit the site, and they were able to communicate their advice and comments.

This delicate situation changed drastically in autumn 1996, when large-scale construction and development works at the *Haram* were initiated by the northern branch of the Islamic Movement—a popular ultra-religious movement supported by large circles of Israel's Arab community. Major renovations of 'Solomon's Stables' were conducted in order to develop the underground ancient vaults into a huge new mosque. These works were executed without the involvement of archaeologists or conservators of the *Waqf*, and at the same time Israeli archaeologists were prevented from visiting the site.

In 1998–2000 further work was carried out by the Islamic Movement in the ancient underground passages and vaults beneath the southern part of the Temple Mount. These works reached a zenith toward the end of 1999, when a monumental staircase and entrance was excavated down into 'Solomon's Stables' (Avni and

Seligman 2001: 34–37; Reiter 2001: 308–16; Berkovitz 2001: 62). In the course of these works an enormous pit was dug with heavy machinery without any archaeological supervision, causing major and irrevocable changes to the site (Seligman 2007).

The attitude of the Islamic Movement towards the archaeological heritage of the *Haram* and its surroundings was well outlined in several occasional meetings between Israeli archaeologists and the head of the Islamic Movement—Sheikh Ra'ed Salakh, an Israeli citizen and former mayor of the Arab-Israeli town of Umm el-Fahm. (These meetings were conducted in 1996 with Gideon Avni.) During these meetings Sheikh Salakh explained his reluctance towards allowing any scientific research at the site, saying that because this was an exclusively Muslim sacred area, archaeological data are of no relevance to the Islamic identity of the site. In his view scientific research at such a site contradicts the religious character of the sacred enclosure, and any such research at the site should be avoided. Construction and development works at the site should be conducted only for the benefit of the believers, receiving precedent over all extraneous scientific interests. In any case, the Islamic authority on the *Haram* is absolute and does not need 'reinforcement' by historical and archaeological data. The Muslim believers need no further proof to reinforce their identification with the sacred enclosure.

This view, which expresses a clear lack of concern with the cultural and heritage significance of a religious site, is emblematic also at other major, currently active religious holy sites around the globe (discussed further below). Despite this clear religious reluctance to accept any kind of archaeological research, the degree to which the archaeological authorities have been involved in activity on the site has varied with time. Under British rule, the Department of Antiquities was closely involved in technical matters; the main monuments on the Mount were surveyed and documented, and

plans were drawn by British architects for the renovation of certain buildings. Archaeologists could freely access every corner of the Temple Mount, and indeed they did so, photographing and preparing drawings. During Jordanian rule over Jerusalem (1948–67), no major archaeological or architectural studies were carried out at the Temple Mount. The connections of the Israeli Department of Antiquities with the Islamic religious authorities were very limited, as the latter did not recognize Israeli control over east Jerusalem. Between 1980 and 1996, however, professional ties on a personal level were forged between the technical staff of the *Waqf*—archaeologists, architects, and museum curators—and archaeologists of the IAA. These informal contacts were strengthened in the early 1990s, but were completely stopped by the end of that decade, with the penetration of the Islamic Movement to a major position in the sacred enclosure and the intense troubles that engulfed the whole region from autumn 2000.

A comparative examination of the patterns of contacts between scholars and the religious authorities at the Temple Mount during the periods of British, Jordanian and Israeli rule indicates that at no time have the governmental authorities enjoyed full control of construction and development at the site. But together with this observation it should be noted that archaeologists, architects, art historians and other scholars were allowed to conduct their academic research with the informal cooperation of professional representatives of the *Waqf* (e.g. Creswell 1969; Wilkinson 1987; Rosen-Ayalon 1989; Shani and Chen 2001). The *Waqf* itself conducted architectural surveys of the monuments in the compound through its Technical Department (Natsheh 2000).

### Archaeological Research at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Figure 4)

The pattern of research and the type of contacts between archaeologists and the religious

authorities responsible for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are strikingly different from those just described for the Temple Mount. In contrast to the Temple Mount, which had been closed to travellers and scholars until the mid-nineteenth century, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was the subject of numerous descriptions in travellers' and pilgrims' literature from the fourth century AD up to the modern period (e.g. Vincent and Abel 1914–26: 206-17, 233-47; Wilkinson 1977; 1988; Ben Arie 1984: 251-70). The nineteenth century scientific documentation of the Church and its surroundings was based on earlier detailed plans of the Church (Ballerini and Hoade 1953). The publication of these first plans provided the basis for architectural and archaeological studies that attempted to assess the stages of development of the sacred monument (e.g. Willis 1849; de Vogüé 1860: 118-32; Vincent and Abel 1914–26: 89-300).

T. Tobler (1851) conducted the first detailed scientific analysis of the Church in 1846, and the comprehensive map of the Church compound, published by C. Schick (Guthe 1885; Goren and Rubin 1996), served as a pioneering foundation for later studies of the complex. This map also portrays graphically the physical division of the complex between the various Christian communities (Figure 5), and was used to define the *status quo* between the six Christian denominations that possess the Church: Greek Orthodox, Latins, Armenians, Copts, Ethiopians and Assyrians (Cust 1929; Colbi 1988: 81-140). In addition, Schick (e.g. 1888; 1889; 1898) published numerous studies on the Church and its surroundings. Archaeological research concerning specific areas of the Church was carried out by C. Clermont-Ganneau (1899: 85-115), who documented the remains exposed during the construction of the Russian hospice named for Alexander Nevsky on the south-eastern side of the complex. Later study by A.W. Clapham (1921) concentrated on the Frankish remains in and



**Figure 4.** The Holy Sepulchre compound—airial view from east. The Crusader Church is located in the centre of the rectangular compound. Around the church additional buildings were constructed during medieval times and during the nineteenth century.

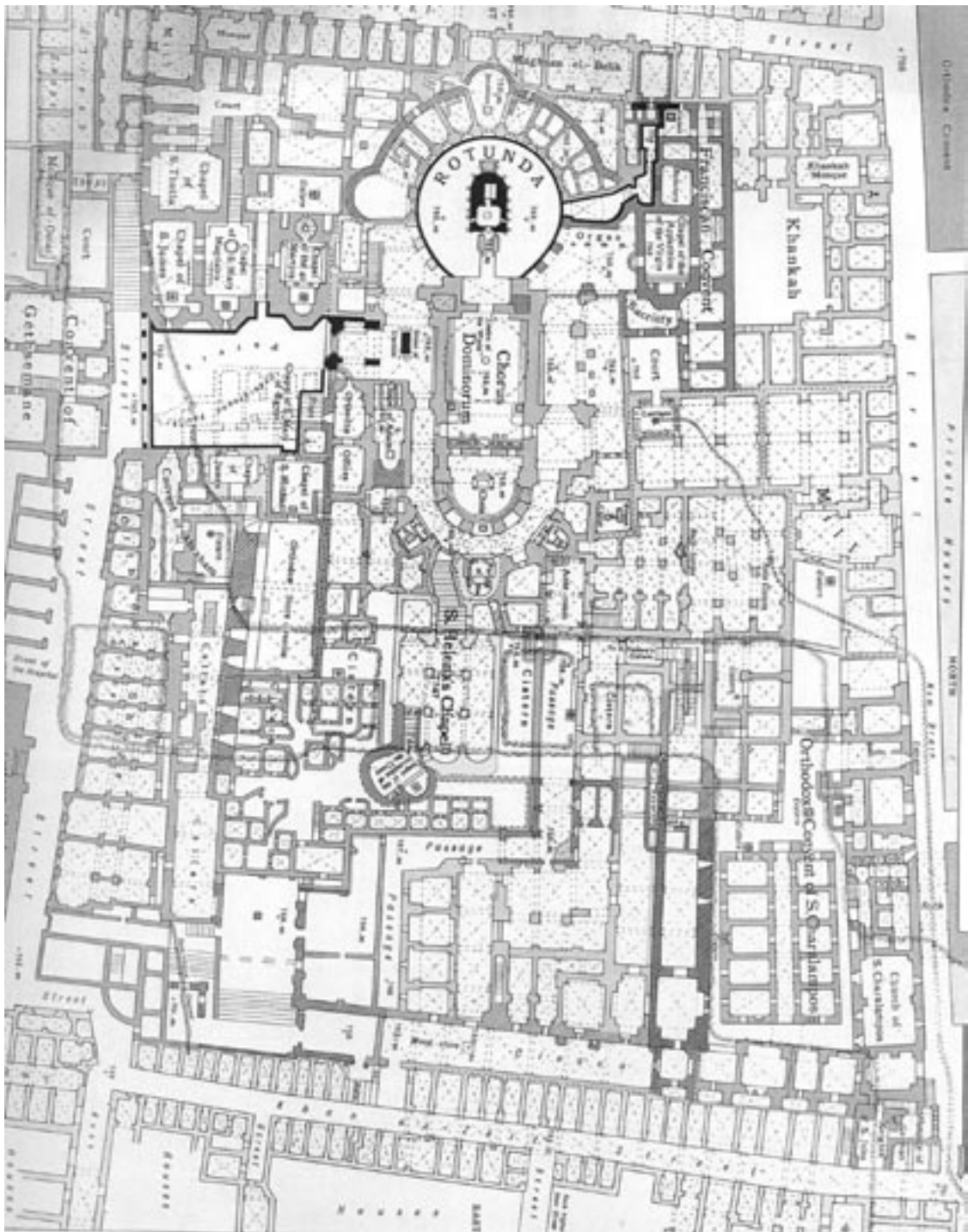


Figure 5. The Holy Sepulchre compound—general plan outlining the division of properties between the Christian denominations.

close to the Holy Sepulchre. At the start of the twentieth century, the Dominican fathers L.H. Vincent and F.M. Abel (1914–26) conducted detailed research of the Church. This was published as part of their monumental work on the archaeology and history of Jerusalem and remains to this day the most comprehensive developmental study of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The fragile physical state of the ancient monument brought about a series of architectural and constructional works that concentrated on documenting the Church (e.g. Harvey 1935). Extensive renovations carried out on the church from the beginning of the twentieth century were closely accompanied by architects and archaeologists appointed by the ecclesiastical authorities (e.g. Coüasnon 1974). The Latin Patriarchate authorized archaeologists from the Franciscan Order to undertake archaeological research during the comprehensive renovation of the Church in the 1960s (Corbo 1981; 1988). Limited excavations were conducted by Corbo in the course of construction. Among the notable finds were sections of the original fourth-century church, providing data for the partial reconstruction of the Byzantine church. From the 1970s a team of Greek archaeologists and architects have been active in the church at the invitation of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate (Katsimbini 1977).<sup>4</sup> In its turn untrained clergy of the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate excavated in their part of the church, allowing Israeli archaeologists to document the excavation (Broshi and Barkay 1985). In the last few years the Coptic Metropolitan of Jerusalem and the Near East has authorized the authors of this paper to excavate and conduct studies in the Coptic Patriarchate within the Holy Sepulchre complex (Avni and Seligman 2003). In addition a detailed study of the Tomb of Christ and its surrounding Edicule was published by British archaeologists (Biddle 1999). These research activities were accompanied by sev-

eral studies that aimed to analyze the development of the Church throughout its history (e.g. Gibson and Taylor 1994; Patrich 1999; Biddle *et al.* 2000; Krüger 2000).

### Archaeologists and the Christian Communities—Patterns of Connection

The intensive archaeological research conducted over the past 150 years in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre displays a relatively open-minded approach by the Christian communities towards scholarly research. Archaeologists, art historians and architects were permitted to conduct limited research and documentation of the complex. Here, as on the Temple Mount, much of this work was a by-product of the constant maintenance works carried out in the Church. But in contrast to the Temple Mount, small excavations were allowed in the Church and surrounding areas as part of this process. Especially conspicuous were parallel groups of architects, archaeologists and engineers appointed by the Christian communities (mostly the Latins and the Greek Orthodox), who were given free-range in the areas of the Church under their communities' jurisdiction.

Constant dialogue over the years has existed between the heads of the Christian communities and professional officials of the Departments of Antiquities. These contacts related mainly to aspects of preservation and safety on the site. The archive of the mandatory Department of Antiquities contains a number of thick files including wide-ranging correspondence between the Directors of the Department, the District Commissioner and the heads of the communities concerning the conservation and up-keep of the ancient structure of the Church. These contacts became especially intense following the disastrous earthquake of July 1927, which caused major structural damage to the already neglected Church. In contrast to the Temple Mount, where much of the activity

of the Department of Antiquities consisted of inspection visits and irregular meetings with officials of the *Waaf*, the Department's involvement in the matters of the Church was much more intensive. A joint professional committee of the Department of Antiquities and the Christian communities was established, and the Archaeological Council—the supreme advisory board to the High Commissioner—was actively involved in professional issues relating to the Church that were often raised in its meetings.

Thus for example, the renovation and replacement of the dome of the Catholicon in the 1930s was conducted with joint funding of the mandatory government of Palestine and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, under the guidance of the Public Works Department. The Patriarchate paid the British authorities directly for some of the work. The government appointed specialists in the fields of architecture and engineering, who published their work in detailed reports concerning the structural state of various elements of the Church.<sup>5</sup> In 1937 a similar joint project was conducted with the Franciscan Custos of the Holy Land, Father Alberto Gori, to repair and replace the mosaics on the floor and ceiling of Golgotha (Calvary). In a letter dated 10/9/1937, the Custos states he has worked in complete understanding with the authorities and has followed the strictest professional guidelines dictated by them.

The most important example of the cooperation between the mandatory Department of Antiquities and the heads of the Christian communities was the close coordination to remove the highly decorative lintels of the Crusader period from the entrance to the Holy Sepulchre for treatment and safe-keeping in the Rockefeller Museum. This task was conducted in 1929 with the assurance that the mandatory authorities would return the lintels to their original place after their consolidation and the reversal of the disintegration of the decorative elements of the lintel.<sup>6</sup>

It should be emphasized, however, that within this spirit of cooperation the communities jealously guarded their autonomy to decide upon works within the complex as defined by the *Status Quo* agreement. The Department of Antiquities was not involved in decision-making and functioned as a professional support body concerned with the proper execution of those decisions. The policy adopted by the directors of the Department of Antiquities, and by other government authorities in Jerusalem, was to minimize governmental interference within the Church. This was in order to avoid intervention in the day-to-day affairs of management and to stand aside from situations in which the authorities would have to intervene in the internecine strife between the communities concerning ownership rights in the Church. The involvement of the staff of the Department mostly concerned the provision of professional judgments on projects in the Church and advising the heads of the Christian communities on subjects of daily management of the Church and the visits of pilgrims.<sup>7</sup>

This policy led to a situation where proper professional control of building, restoration and physical activities in the Church was lacking for long periods. Thus the 'restoration' conducted in the 1970s and 1980s was not accompanied by experts in the field of conservation. These works were strongly criticized by outside professionals due to the massive modern additions supplemented by architects and engineers operating on behalf of the Latin, the Greek Orthodox and the Armenian Patriarchates, additions that contravened the character of the ancient fabric of the Church. Towards the end of the 1990s a discernable shift in the attitude of the heads of the communities became apparent, especially in the Greek, Latin and Coptic churches. Over the last few years conservation projects have been conducted at the Church by the IAA at the invitation of the Coptic Church (in their

rooms behind the Rotunda) and of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate (the Belfry).

A good example of the interactions between outside archaeologists and the leaders of the Christian communities is evident in the work of two research teams operating at the Church. M. Biddle, of Oxford University, conducted in-depth research on the Tomb of Christ during the 1990s (Biddle 1999). During the fieldwork, which included thorough documentation of the Edicule and its surrounding, he was granted permission to operate in the most sacred part of the Church. In order not to interfere with the daily ceremonies at the site and not to disturb the numerous visiting pilgrims, part of the documentation work was conducted during the night, when the Church was closed. The leaders of the religious authorities in charge gave the archaeologists special permission to conduct their research, and aid was provided by the local clergy.

Another example of similar fruitful connections is the authors' experience in conducting archaeological excavations within the precincts of the Coptic Patriarchate adjacent to the Church (Avni and Seligman 2003). Further excavations were conducted within the Coptic rooms beside the Rotunda of the Holy Sepulchre. These studies benefited from the warm welcome extended by the Coptic Metropolitan of Jerusalem and the Near East, Dr. Anba Abraham, who expressed great interest in the archaeological work, and permitted archaeological and conservational supervision of the works conducted at his premises. His support of the archaeological research was motivated mainly by the desire to find firm evidence of the earliest Coptic presence at the Church in ancient times. The interaction between archaeologists and the members of the Coptic community, some of whom actively participated in the excavations, became a memorable experience for both sides.

Despite the cooperation and openness of the Christian communities to receive profes-

sional judgments as well as archaeological and architectural information, and even to execute conservation and research projects in the Holy Sepulchre complex, the limitations of the *Status Quo* agreement and inter-community suspicion has restricted the possibility of conducting full-scale, proper archaeological research in the Church and its surroundings. Nonetheless 150 years of intensive archaeological and architectural research in the Church has been made possible by permission for scholarly access to most of the complex, except where it is restricted by the fact that the Holy Sepulchre is an active holy site visited daily by thousands of believers, pilgrims and tourists.

## Discussion

Analysis of archaeological involvement on the Temple Mount/*Haram el-Sharif* and in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre shows different patterns in the reactions of religious circles to archaeologists. The Temple Mount situation is characterized by constant reticence on the part of the Muslim religious authorities to allow involvement of outside academic bodies at the sacred enclosure. This basic reticence did not prevent the forming of a series of comprehensive studies on the standing monuments at the site based on systematic surveying and documentation. Research activity on the Temple Mount has at times been conducted in spite of official disapproval or with the averted eye of the religious administration of the *Waqf*. Unofficial collaboration on the basis of personal contacts with archaeologists, architects and engineers of the Technical Department of the *Waqf* at times enabled external archaeological and architectural research at the site, but excluded the possibility of archaeological excavation.

The reasons for the official unwillingness of the Muslim religious circles on the Temple Mount to collaborate with external govern-



mental and research bodies can be explained by the scepticism over the importance of research into early periods of the complex. This type of research was never a component that could strengthen the religious identity of Muslim believers and thus the religious establishment did not see it as a factor that could aid or further its needs. The *Waqf* have at times expressed its alarm and reticence to research which would, in their view, weaken the hold of Islam on the Mount by the exposure of early 'non-Muslim' remains. This attitude was further reinforced with the penetration of the Islamic Movement to active development projects at the *Haram*.

However, claims that have been made, mainly by Jewish national-religious circles, concerning attempts by Muslim elements to erase all non-Muslim remains on the Temple Mount, have not been demonstrated conclusively.<sup>8</sup> Indeed Muslim religious circles, especially those connected to the Islamic Movement, have not even displayed interest in these claims as in their eyes the Muslim ownership of the *Haram el-Sharif* cannot be challenged. It seems that the opposition to research on the Temple Mount has its primary source in the determination to protect the holiness of the site for Islam and to prevent external interference or any attempt to undermine the exclusivity of Muslim control that would follow from the possible discovery of earlier remains. The only research activities permitted were those following on from projects that contributed directly to the preservation and physical maintenance of the buildings. Several research projects were carried out or assisted by the Technical Department of the *Waqf* (e.g. Natsheh 2000). This was the case, for example, with the extensive repairs of the *el-Aqsā* Mosque in the 1930s and 1940s and the massive renovations of the Dome of the Rock in the 1990s.

These attitudes have influenced the relationship between the *Waqf* and the Department of Antiquities from the early days of the Brit-

ish Mandate. Although no official relations between the organizations have existed, unofficial connections and cooperation have been cultivated (Avni and Seligman 2001: 41-42). The impact of Israeli domination over East Jerusalem (since 1967) clearly has affected the scope of the relationship between the Israeli Department of Antiquities and the *Waqf*, but on a minor level compared to previous periods. Only after 1996, with the increased influence of the Islamic Movement and the fact that the Temple Mount has become a major political issue disputed between Israelis and Palestinians, have these unofficial relationships between archaeologists and architects from both sides been interrupted.

It is interesting to compare the pattern of interaction we have described between the Muslim authorities and archaeologists with the archaeological involvement in the 'Western Wall Tunnels'. This site, located north of the Wailing Wall and maintained by Jewish religious authorities, consists of a network of ancient subterranean halls and a long, artificially mined gallery quarried between 1968 and 1996 along the whole length of the western wall of the Temple mount, a total of 300 m (Bahat 2000; see Figure 1).

The existence of a large network of underground structures was already documented in the nineteenth century by the Palestine Exploration Fund explorers (Warren 1876; 1884). These large halls were rediscovered after 1967 and used as a northern extension of the Jewish prayer area of the Western Wall. In 1968, the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs commenced a long process of 'cleaning' the debris from these structures, followed by the quarrying of the narrow tunnel along the western wall of the Temple Mount. As the entrance to this area was located in the Wailing Wall plaza, which was a declared holy site, archaeologists were prevented from supervising the works. For almost twenty years the work at the tunnel was characterized by uncontrolled digging that

contravened all ethical principles of archaeological investigation. Only in 1985, after a long period of tension and pressure from the Department of Antiquities, was archaeological supervision of the works established, allowing archaeologists to document the finds. During the 1990s, archaeological involvement was extended into controlled excavations in several sections of the tunnel under the stewardship of D. Bahat. Following the violent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians as a result of the opening of the northern exit of the tunnel to the Via Dolorosa in autumn 1996, the 'Western Wall Tunnels' were opened to the public in 1997 as a major tourist attraction. The site in its present form combines a general touristic site with a Jewish religious site.

Further development works were conducted at the 'Western Wall Tunnels' more recently, accompanied by scheduled archaeological excavations at the medieval underground structures north of the Wailing Wall. The 2006 opening at this location of the 'Chain of Generations Centre', dedicated to the presentation of Jewish identity and its connection to Jerusalem, emphasizes the national-religious character of the 'Western Wall Tunnels'. The centre was housed in Mamluk and Crusader vaults, which were comprehensively conserved, while several archaeological findings from the excavations, among them an ancient Jewish ritual bath, were incorporated in the display.

It would seem that the former reluctance of Jewish religious authorities to allow any archaeological intervention in their work, which was considered by them primarily as a religiously motivated venture, was similar to the reluctant attitude of the Islamic religious authorities in the *Haram* towards foreign interventions in their activities. But unlike the Muslim authorities, the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs has incorporated archaeologists in later stages of this project, and also used the archaeological findings in the presentation of the site.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to the suspicion and the introspection that characterized the reaction of the *Waqf* to research at the Temple Mount, the leaders of the Christian communities were less reluctant to permit archaeological and architectural research in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and its surroundings. Cooperation between scholars and the heads of the Christian communities has existed from the early stages of modern research at the Church. Archaeologists and architects were granted permission of access to the various parts of the complex. Over the years, however, it has not been able to carry out comprehensive research at the Church and the surrounding areas without the individual permission of each of the Christian communities concerning the specific areas under their control. Strict division of the space in accordance with the *Status Quo* agreement and the constant suspicions between the Christian communities has at times led to restrictions on research because of the territorial ownerships of the various communities.

The relatively open attitude of the Christian communities to the execution of archaeological and architectural research in the Holy Sepulchre compound has enabled the work of a number of groups of scholars operating under the auspices of the communities. Over the years, scholars of various nationalities have conducted in-depth studies at the Church.

How can we understand the motivation for this openness of the Christian religious establishments toward external researchers at the Holy Sepulchre? Seemingly we should look for answers on a number of levels:

1. The disputes between the Christian communities on ownership rights of certain parts of the complex raised the desire to 'prove', with the aid of 'objective' archaeological data, the antiquity of one or other of the communities in the Holy Sepulchre or in Jerusalem. The role of the

archaeologist in the eyes of the heads of the communities is to establish, using recognized scientific methods, that the community under whose support the research is being conducted was present at the site from the earliest days of the existence of the Holy Sepulchre. This 'proof' would provide a well-founded historic basis to be used in the long-standing disputes concerning territorial control over areas of the complex. This was the basis for permits given by various Christian communities to groups of scholars to work under their auspices. Notably, the make-up of these groups usually matched the ethnic composition of the sponsor of the work. The archaeologist was deemed to be a mediator who could help present or strengthen the historical sequence with real evidence, and thus show that a reliable witness of the 'correct' ethnic or ecclesiastical association was in attendance at the earliest times—maybe even from the days of Jesus and the apostles, or from the time of the foundation of the Church in the fourth century AD. In this context the inclusion in the research of the Holy Sepulchre of 'outsiders'—independent European and Israeli archaeologists—should be noted. These scholars were accepted as unbiased professionals, whose conclusions should be unanimously accepted.

2. The aspiration to execute modern construction and development works in the abandoned areas of the Church compound under the guidance of recognized professional specialists. Over the last few years archaeological and architectural research has become increasingly perceived as an accompaniment to the improvement of physical conditions for visitors by the development of additional spaces for pilgrims and visitors to the site.

3. An honest desire to encourage research into the ancient remains of the complex as part of the study of the mutual Christian past of all communities and to prove the authenticity of the site as the burial place of Christ. This aspiration increased in the second half of the nineteenth century when a debate developed concerning the authenticity of the tomb of Christ resulting from the proposal, adopted by Protestant circles, to identify the 'Garden Tomb', north of the Damascus Gate, as Christ's tomb (Barkay 1986).

#### *Differing Attitudes to Holy Sites*

How can the differences in attitude of the Christian and Muslim establishments to their holy sites be explained? It seems that we should search for the source of these differences in the political, social and religious dissimilarity of the two cultic sites. The Temple Mount has, from the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in the seventh century AD, been under exclusive Muslim religious control except for short periods. Strange as it may seem, in periods when Jerusalem was in non-Muslim hands the importance of the Temple Mount as a Muslim religious focus increased (Elad 1995; Reiter 2001: 156). Even though today rivalry exists over control for administrative hegemony of the *Haram el-Sharīf* between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and the Islamic Movement (Reiter 2001: 158-60), this has not influenced the singular belief of the various Muslim elements involved with the operation of the sacred enclosure concerning the identity of the site and its sanctity to the Islamic world. In such a situation there is no need for archaeological and historical research at the site to provide additional proof of that Muslim hegemony. Quite the opposite, research of this type is perceived by Muslim religious circles as a threat, as the exposure of early remains on the Temple Mount could undercut exclusive Muslim control.

By contrast the Holy Sepulchre is divided between six Christian communities who for hundreds of years have quarrelled over control of territory and religious rights in this large and complex site. Consequently each community has a certain interest in encouraging studies that would prove without prejudice the antiquity of Christian ownership of the site and its authenticity. In addition one should not ignore the fact that no inter-faith or national conflict exists in the Holy Sepulchre that could challenge Christian control of the place, a truth that allows greater openness to research by people of various nationalities.

At the Temple Mount/*Haram el-Sharif* the situation is fundamentally different in that the site is holy both to Judaism and Islam. This basic fact creates an inbuilt tension between religious factions of the two faiths. From 1967 this tension has expressed itself in repeated attempts by extreme national religious Jewish groups to express actively their aspiration to renew Jewish rule of the Mount and even act with force to fulfil it (Shragai 1995; Reiter 2001: 297-317). These attempts have heightened the fears of the Muslim religious establishment to any challenge that might undermine the historical connection of Islam to the site. Accordingly archaeological research of Israeli scholars close to the Temple Mount, and especially the excavations conducted south of the Mount between 1968 and 1982, are presented as a tool in the political and national conflict and as an Israeli attempt to test Muslim control of the site. This attitude has brought about an increased reluctance by official Muslim bodies to allow any external research activity inside the complex. It should not be ignored, however, that this official reticence existed well before the implementation of Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem. As noted above, from the start of modern research in Jerusalem in the nineteenth century, similar claims have been made pertaining to the activities of foreign scholars in the site.

*National Archaeology and Religious Archaeology*  
While the considerations of the various communities' religious leaders in retaining the holy complexes of the Temple Mount and the Holy Sepulchre to define the role of outside scholars are relatively clear, one should consider how the scholars themselves saw their task in the complicated religious surroundings where they operated. Can we point to a phenomenon of biased 'National Archaeology' (Trigger 1984), or rather 'Religious Archaeology' when studies are conducted under the auspices of organizations that engaged or permitted the research? Was the research at the Temple Mount and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre conducted by biased archaeologists who were working under national or religious influences?

The link between archaeological inquiry and politics has been debated recently by several scholars who have tried to define the role of archaeology in the formation of political and national identity in various places of the world (e.g. Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Fowler 1987; Silberman 1989; Meskell 1998; Kohl 1998; Kane 2003). These studies point to the fact that in almost every place where a connection between archaeology and a national or political value system has formed, it has not been possible to ignore its influence on research or on the scholars themselves. Often an archaeological discovery has served as a central component in the creation of national identities. As a result archaeology and its discoveries became a notable facet in generating the national narrative in different places around the globe.<sup>10</sup> Notably most of these studies do not relate to archaeological work conducted in an environment of clear religious character, like the Temple Mount and the Holy Sepulchre.

It seems that the religious sector is fundamentally different from the national one: while nationalism uses archaeology, the religious establishment usually does not need archaeology to reinforce its position in a site already

recognized as holy by hundreds of thousands believers and pilgrims (Turner 1974; Eade and Sallnow 1991). The pilgrims coming to a holy site accept the religious narrative with no reservation, and usually are not interested in archaeological evaluations of the authenticity of the site and its development through the ages. Therefore there is no role for archaeologists in the religious scheme of creating or maintaining the context of a holy site, unlike the major role of archaeological discoveries for creating a collective national memory.

The use of archaeology in a contemporary religious context can be found in several other case studies around the globe. Probably the example most relevant to the Temple Mount/*Haram el-Sharif* is the case of the *Babri Masjid* in Ayodhya, India. The mosque, constructed in the sixteenth century, became the source of dispute between Muslims and Hindus in the nineteenth century as tensions between the two religious groups increased. The religious confrontation concerned conflicting historical claims to the site, maintained by the Hindus as the birthplace of Rama, one of the most revered Hindu deities. Hindu hardliners argued that while constructing the mosque, the Muslims destroyed an ancient Hindu temple at the site. Archaeologists were brought into the conflict by the Indian central government in order to provide evidence for the ancient development of the cultic centre. Limited excavations were conducted at the site in order to verify its origins (Lal 2001), but they produced contradictory evidence (Bernabak and Pollock 1996; Golden 2004: 184-85). The Ayodhya conflict resulted in the violent destruction of the Babri mosque in December 1992 by tens of thousands of Hindu protestors who razed the mosque to the ground. The archaeological involvement in this intense religious conflict continued with a government initiative, proclaimed in 2003, to conduct further archaeological excavations at the site in order to trace its historical origins.

The role of archaeologists in the Ayodhya conflict seems of different character than that in Jerusalem. In the Ayodhya case, the archaeological data were of great significance in the efforts of the secular Indian government to resolve the religious dispute through an 'objective' archaeological investigation into the authenticity of the site. Archaeologists involved had to maintain their professional integrity in face of their emotional involvement in this issue either as Hindus or Muslims.

A different type of archaeological involvement in a 'religious' site can be traced in the research of the catacombs in Rome. Discovered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these large underground cavities were adopted by the Vatican as tangible evidence for the lives and persecutions of the early Christians. The Vatican, motivated by the desire to uncover evidence for the early Christian presence in Rome, was involved practically in the exploration of the Catacombs. Christian religious institutions that owned the majority of the catacombs allowed scholars to investigate only limited parts of the complexes. The discovery of the Catacombs triggered the development of 'Christian Archaeology' as a specific trend of scholarship. The nineteenth-century scholarly involvement in the research of the Catacombs occasionally created tension between archaeologists and the Christian religious establishment. Thus G.B. de Rossi, one of the notable scholars who worked in the Catacombs on behalf of the Vatican, and a devout Catholic, was subjected to accusations from the religious circles for being 'the ally of the Protestants'. Rossi regarded the archaeological evidence as it stood, and sometimes his finds and interpretations contradicted the official religious point of view (Frend 1996: 77-89). The discovery of several Jewish catacombs around Rome created another sensitive aspect in the research of the Catacombs. These Catacombs were thoroughly investigated only in later years, when the responsibility for several complexes was

transferred from the Vatican to the archaeological authorities of Rome (Rutgers 2000).

Conflicts between the interests of church authorities and archaeologists exist also in some of the medieval churches and cathedrals of Europe, in which occasional renovations or maintenance works necessitated archaeological documentation or rescue excavations. The archaeological investigation was sometimes restricted by the religious authorities in charge of the sites, who were not interested in large-scale archaeological excavations in their premises. Several exceptional cases like the Geneva cathedral, which was extensively excavated during renovations, only emphasizes the rule that archaeologists were treated as an obstacle to the religious needs and preferences of the religious establishment. We have not been able to trace clear documentation for these disputes. It seems that both the archaeologists and the religious authorities regard the interaction concerning the keeping of the cultural heritage properties within religious monuments as 'sensitive'.

It would seem that one of the main issues in the complex interaction between religious circles and archaeologists is the actual possibility of conducting archaeological research within religious surroundings. To what extent can archaeologists work independently in a monument that primarily functions as a religious shrine? Can an archaeologist conduct unbiased research in these circumstances, especially when he/she is ethnically affiliated to the community in charge of such a site? In this context a distinction should be made between the archaeological exploration of a site and the publication of the research results, on the one hand, and the interpretation and presentation of the religious aspects of a monument to believers and pilgrims, on the other. While the former is almost completely in the hands of archaeologists, the latter might be heavily influenced and biased by the interests of the religious circles involved.

#### *Archaeology and Archaeologists in Jerusalem*

Taking these questions back to the holy sites in Jerusalem, we now attempt to evaluate the nature of archaeological work in these sites, asking whether the archaeologists who studied the sacred compounds in Jerusalem were influenced by the religious frameworks in which they worked and if the religious belief of the scholars themselves prejudiced their results.

A review of the published research shows that even in instances where the scholar was of the same faith as the title holder of the area studied (for example the work of archaeologists of the Franciscan Order in the Holy Sepulchre), it is hardly possible to observe a bias in the research arising from that religious belief. In overview, the maintaining of recognized research principles characterizes the archaeological and architectural study of these sites. The research results, which are mainly documentation reports of physical remains and the dating of development phases of the complexes, did not fundamentally change the existing historical knowledge of the sites.

A brief survey of research results published over the last 150 years shows the impression of environmental influence upon them to be more complex. Both in the Temple Mount and the Holy Sepulchre the historical and religious narrative was lucid and both served as foci for pilgrimage well before the onset of archaeological inquiries into them. Consequently scholars did not need to form a new narrative or to suit it to the religious requirements of the believers. In some cases they were expected to provide further proof for the existing narrative—specifically at the Holy Sepulchre, and in others the alarm of the religious establishment focused on the possibility that finds from below the surface could undercut the existing narrative—mainly the Temple Mount.

Although sometimes restricted in their ability to conduct full-scale fieldwork, archaeologists enjoyed research freedom, and were not denied access to 'problematic' areas from the

point of interpretation. Detailed evaluation shows research preference in some cases, but certainly not perversion of the research results for the benefit of one religious community or another.

Seemingly there is no better expression of this research freedom than an examination of the study results, taking into consideration the ethnic and religious background of the various scholars working in the Temple Mount and the Holy Sepulchre. Such an appraisal demonstrates that at the two sites scholars of all faiths and nationalities, both local and foreign, have operated. Christian scholars (Catholics and Protestants), Jews, Muslims, Israelis, Palestinians, Europeans and Americans have conducted studies in the sites continually from the mid-nineteenth century. Comparative examination of their research does not indicate converse or opposing results arising from the origin or faith of the scholar. Evaluation of the scientific literature does not point to instances of tendentious use in research for national, political or religious requirements due to the origin of the scholar. At the Temple Mount, a site fraught with deep religious and political sensitivities—both Muslim and Jewish—involvement of Israeli scholars is notable in the study of the Early Islamic monuments.<sup>11</sup> At the Holy Sepulchre there are a number of outstanding examples where Christian researchers have published documentation of the components of the Church or historical reconstructions without bias. C. Schick, a Protestant by faith, was appointed by the Ottoman authorities to document comprehensively the Church with the purpose of instituting the *status quo* between the communities (Goren and Rubin 1996). The wide-ranging work of the Dominican fathers, Vincent and Abel, also lacks any clear attempt to skew the data ensuing from their religiosity. This was also the case in the study of Coüasnon and Corbo who conducted archaeological and architectural documentation of the Holy Sepulchre, observing the his-

torical development of the structure. The still unpublished recording carried out in the last few years in various parts of the Church by a team of archaeologists and architects operating on behalf of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate was also performed purely from a professional and scientific viewpoint.

A different picture is given when examining the changes and modern architectural additions made during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in parts of the Church. Here clear preference is discernable by the planners and contractors in the matching of the building character to the ethnic character they represent, to the point of distortion and fundamental alteration of the early character of the structure. The areas of the Holy Sepulchre in the control of the Franciscans were remodelled according to the architectural and artistic principles of the western churches, while the changes and additions conducted in the Greek Orthodox sections were done in the fashion of modern orthodox churches. In the framework of the massive renovation of the Holy Sepulchre executed by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate at the start of the nineteenth century, following the conflagration that caused major damage to the structure in 1808, focused attempts were made to remove remains belonging culturally to other communities in the complex. In the Chapel of St Helena, under the possession of the Armenian Patriarchate, extensive renovation was conducted in the 1960s and 1970s which included the laying of a new mosaic floor in Byzantine style, depicting national churches in Armenia.

## Conclusion

An assessment of archaeological and architectural research on the Temple Mount and the Holy Sepulchre displays the complexity of archaeological studies in sensitive religious sites. The equally sensitive position of archaeological research conducted in religious surroundings is

represented by the complicated relationships developed between archaeologists and the religious authorities in charge of the holy sites in different locations around the globe. In most locations the leaders of the religious communities and the religious establishment were not interested in archaeological findings, and did not treat archaeology as a tool for creating and maintaining their religious identification. This reluctant attitude is contradictory to the role of archaeology in the establishment of modern national societies.

The religious leadership is usually indifferent to the historical significance of a holy site and to the nature of archaeological evidence. Archaeological research is treated as a disturbance to the daily religious practices, and in certain cases, as a threat to the religious hegemony of a site. Sometimes archaeologists were accepted at a site due to informal relationships created between them and the religious leaders, or as part of a construction, conservation or restoration venture at a specific holy site. In other cases the religious authorities reluctantly accepted the archaeological presence as part of the delicate relationship that developed between religious and secular rule of the holy sites.

The case of the *Babri Masjid* in Ayodhya is an exceptional one. Here the central government tried to use archaeological research as a tool for decreasing tension between Hindus and Muslims, with the expectation that the archaeological findings would help to solve a religious dispute. However, as the findings from excavations were not conclusive and were not accepted by both religious parties, it had no affect on the inter-faith confrontation.

The exploration of historical monuments and archaeological sites which are also holy sites maintained by religious bodies is by definition a most problematic enterprise, both from the practical aspects of accessibility for research, and also for the ideological implication of such research. But at the same time, when evaluat-

ing the results of scientific research conducted at such sites, it is clear that in most cases the archaeological work was conducted in an unbiased manner, and scholars presented their results professionally. The results of archaeological or architectural research, however, have often been used by diverse religious, nationalist and political elements as a tool to justify their claims for identity and ownership. At times this has been conducted with selective exploitation of part of the research results, or in more severe cases, with distortion and falsification of the facts gathered from archaeological and architectural research.

## Notes

1. This legislation was formulated as 'Palestine (Holy Places) Order in Council 1924' (see Cust 1929; Berkovitz 2000: 26-40).
2. The scheduling of the Temple Mount as a declared antiquities site according to Israeli law appears in official gazetteer no. 1390, published on 31 August 1967.
3. This was the situation, for instance, during a massive earthwork conducted east of the Dome of the Rock in 1970 (Avni and Seligman 2001: 25-26).
4. Over the past few years a team from the Polytechnic of Athens, under the leadership of G. Lavas and under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, have conducted detailed documentation of the areas controlled by the Greeks and Latins.
5. In addition to the detailed report by Harvey (1935), there are further structural reports of parts of the complex in the archives of the mandatory Department of Antiquities. Subsequent to one of the reports conducted by the Department in 1947, quick action was taken to support the Edicule which was in danger of collapse. The girder cradle around the tomb is still in place.
6. Documentation of the physical state of the lintels and detailed correspondence that



accompanied the transfer to the Rockefeller Museum are located in the archive of the mandatory Department of Antiquities. The lintels themselves are still on display in the Rockefeller Museum. In the last few years a number of reports have been compiled by the IAA, together with international conservation institutions, in an attempt to preserve the fragile lintels and to produce an excellent copy of the original to be placed above the entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

7. Such involvement was initiated during the discussion to open an emergency exit for the Church before the events of 2000 and the visit of Pope John Paul II. At the end of the process the plan was abandoned due to the lack of mutual agreement between the communities concerning the site of the opening (see Berkovitz 2000: 237).
8. Accusations of this sort have appeared in the public debate that has emerged in the last decade concerning the preservation of antiquities on the Temple Mount. A website ([www.har-habayt.org](http://www.har-habayt.org)) created by the 'The Committee for the Prevention of Destruction of Antiquities on the Temple Mount' claims that ongoing destruction of Jewish remains is taking place at the Temple Mount.
9. The concept and contents of presentation at the 'Western Wall Tunnels' were criticized as representing a nationlistic approach, emphasizing only the ancient Jewish heritage of Jerusalem (Abu El-Haj 2001: 216-28; for a critical response see Joffe 2005).
10. For example, in the cases of Masada in Israel (Zerubavel 1995; Silberman 1999; Ben Yehuda 1995; 2002), the Royal Tombs in Vergina (Kotsakis 1998), and Pharonic Egypt (Hassan 1998; Reid 2002).
11. See for example the research of Elad (1995), Rosen-Ayalon (1989), Shani and Chen (2000) which evaluates the Muslim monuments of the Temple Mount from historical, archaeological and architectural perspectives.

tives.

### About the Authors

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Jon Seligman is the current Regional Archaeologist for Jerusalem. He received his education at the Hebrew University and at the Institute of Archaeology, University of London. Over the last few years he has been involved in the composition of archaeological master plans for the City of Jerusalem and for the Old City of Jerusalem. He has directed numerous excavations, mainly in Jerusalem, Beth Shean and the Carmel and his research interests have concentrated on aspects of Roman, Byzantine and Medieval Jerusalem and on ancient agriculture in the Jerusalem area. Together with Gideon

Avni he has co-directed work in the Holy Sepulchre and also work on ancient Georgian remains in Jerusalem. He is the author of numerous excavation reports and a series of master plans and he is co-author, with Gideon Avni, of *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre* (New York: Rizzoli, 2000).

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