

# Conclusion

A main task of this book and its account of how Jerusalem's physical heritage is enmeshed in religious and national interests and struggles has been to persuade the reader of the severity of numerous entanglements of truth and fiction, of facts and interpretations, and thus of the elusive middle ground between science and ideology. We cannot simply differentiate between the scientific and ideological practice of inquiry to recover the city's actual physical reality, whether above the ground or below. Indeed, capturing and investigating scrupulously and expertly the material remainders of those who have passed through or settled in the city may bring us closer to some real untainted substance of past existence, a quality more easily associated with artifacts and buildings rather than with words or ideas. Yet, religious beliefs and political agendas have the ability to attach themselves as subtly to objects, monuments, and places as they do in written testimonies and spiritual manifestos. Therefore, regardless of the sources we use for a viable reconstruction of Jerusalem's past, our ideas will always remain partial and incomplete. It is the knowledge and admittance to this subjectivity, however, that constitutes a first step in building the necessary bridges to overcome the disparity in perception, opinion, and dogma at the root of most conflicts over Jerusalem. Exposing the idiosyncratic nature of archaeological practice in Jerusalem, rather than unraveling the mysteries of the past, can thus free us from the burden we often tend to impose on the city's cultural legacy.

## CONTEXTUALIZING ISRAELI ARCHAEOLOGY

One of this study's goals was to expose the social, political, and ideological context of Jerusalem's first archaeological investigations to understand the historical

and religious framework that produced and shaped the field of biblical archaeology, initially a matter of sporadic interest, but which quickly evolved into a regular affair of institutional and national profile. This query established how the discipline of excavation progressed slowly but steadily from a pursuit motivated no less by faith and adventure than by scholarly curiosity. At first this endeavor was governed rather chaotically by the Ottomans, then, later, more strictly and conscientiously under the British, and finally flourishing in a machinery of professional expertise under the Israelis. As demonstrated in this survey and analysis, professional and scientific standards made significant progress over time, with the control of excavations passing from independent explorers to institutions established abroad, and then from local establishments to governmental bodies, thus placing the power to shape the science of archaeology into the hands of an increasingly administratively and politically powerful entity. The field thus moved from the convictions of an individual to the beliefs of a community and the ideology of a state, in which institutionalization and operationalization of strategy have played an increasingly dominant role. The progressively structured, institutionalized, and legalized context of archaeological activity does not, however, diminish or eliminate the power and responsibility of the individual person or community implicated in the discovery, presentation, and even, to some extent, the consumption of archaeological discoveries. As we know, archaeology is not an exact science and, therefore, every individual who participates in the process of this knowledge and story producing mechanism, carries part of the responsibility, for better or worse.<sup>1</sup> In concrete terms, this means that an unnamed employee of the IAA who classifies coins from an excavation conducted in East Jerusalem is no less implicated in the ideological aspirations of his or her country than those PEF celebrities such as Charles W. Wilson or a Charles Warren, whose discoveries have trademarked the colonial mission of “digging for God and country” and still carry their names to this day.

Studying and understanding archaeology and its relation to Israel's policies of occupation can thus not be understood without examining how the field first evolved from its inception to the time of the Old City's capture by Israel in 1967 and then beyond to the present. The use of archaeology for religious and political agendas is clearly not an Israeli invention. Colonial models provided the necessary and persistent basis for the neocolonial or nationalist elaborations of early and current Zionist endeavors of archaeological exploration. Without the accomplishments—including trials, errors, and rectifications—of early excavations, Israeli archaeology would not have made the same undeniable contributions to professional standards, exemplified by the use of improved field methods, of superior levels of scientific documentation and analyses, and of increasingly powerful means of public presentation and dissemination tools. The persistent thread in archaeological practice in Jerusalem is thus the combined product of science and ideology, where one feeds

the other, becomes dependent, and, in fact, reinforces the impact of persuasion exponentially.

#### JERUSALEM AS A CASE STUDY

The religious, social, and political complexities of archaeology and cultural heritage in a contested city like Jerusalem demands an evaluation that considers numerous fields of expertise and methods of inquiry, too vast a project to be summarized in just one book. In fact, the enormity of the task has led me to remain focused exclusively on this one city, which regrettably resulted in the exclusion of invaluable comparative investigations. Therefore, I would like to at least point out that the use or misuse of archaeology and cultural heritage for religious and nationalist agendas not only affects the city of Jerusalem. The phenomena of excavations, cultural heritage, and politics entangled—or the domains of archaeopolitics and religiopolitics intertwined—are known and have been debated and written on in various forms and venues, popular and scholarly. The bulldozing of archaeological layers and monuments and the discarding of artifacts is not exclusive to the city under scrutiny here. Intentional destruction and biased preservation, display, and presentation initiatives are known in nearly every place where antiquity and its legacy are valued. Ideologically motivated excavations and restorations, as well as manipulated narratives, have left their imprint in numerous other locations in the region and around the world. In spite of its unique history and complex ethno-religious and national makeup, Jerusalem is not the only place where cultural heritage has been caught up in a regional struggle.

Trends and developments of biblical archaeology in Jerusalem could be studied in light of other sites and areas of significance to this field of investigation, within the Jewish State and beyond, under the banner of one religion versus another. The role of archaeology in the Israeli educational systems could be contrasted to similar educational programs in Europe or the United States. Comparisons could be drawn with existing publications on colonial and nationalist frameworks of archaeological practice. A more nuanced distinction between colonial and postcolonial situations, between nationalist and post-nationalist, could be established. The relationship between governing and occupying forces with oppressed minorities in other domains of cultural or social studies could benefit the analysis of archaeological practice in Jerusalem and other regions of the Middle East. The impact of repatriation and restitution of cultural heritage in places that have a similar historical and political trajectory to Jerusalem could be examined. Parallels could be shown between Jerusalem and other equally contested cities in war or post-conflict situations. Placing the competing narratives of Jerusalem's antiquities into the larger context of the divides between Western and non-Western ideologies and the disparity of cultural priorities would be a most timely topic of inquiry; or,

more specifically, the conflict of Western and Islamic perceptions of archaeology and its tragic outcomes could enhance the current interest of the present inquiry and provide an additional contemporary context of comparison. The possibilities are nearly endless, and the suggested comparanda may provide some inspiration for ideas for further investigations. Jerusalem, indeed, is not the only city that has fallen victim to the religious and political aspirations of individual explorers and their respective communities or nations. Yet, it is the locus we have selected for this study, and it may serve as a useful starting point for future research.

#### MEDIA AND MARKET

An additional domain not sufficiently explored in this study, but pertinent to the discussion of cultural heritage and ideology in Jerusalem, is the role of archaeology's popular and media portrayal, which capitalizes on the notion of Bible adventure and discovery. Administrative procedures and methodical progress have clearly imposed an increasingly structured protocol on archaeological endeavors. Yet, despite the scientific and technological advances in the field, there are still palpable traces of the original spirit of adventure and spirituality associated with digging up the city's biblical past. There may be a general consensus that Parker's grandiose quest to find King Solomon's treasures in Jerusalem was an unreasonable escapade too blatantly unscientific even to the uninitiated of the early 1900s. But so many of today's endeavors in Jerusalem are just as unabashedly motivated by finding relics of Kings David, Solomon, or Herod. This is perhaps best illustrated with the persistent interest in artifacts, monuments, and sites baring a biblical significance, the continued involvement and sponsorship of religious establishments in the excavation, interpretation, and showcasing of finds, as well as the ever more aggressive media coverage, which successfully promotes the excitement of discovering finds of relevance to the Jewish and Judeo-Christian narratives. Numerous projects involving dozens, if not hundreds, of local and international students and volunteers, the growing educational and tourism industry that has developed around the discoveries, and, lastly, the economic incentive and marketability of antiquities promoting this sense of a tangible link to the city's mundane and glorious past have all contributed to both preserve and promote the original spirit of the field and, most importantly, to lastingly and broadly impact the social and religious arena of Jerusalem politics. The relationship between media and market—indeed, the dependency and enhancement of archaeology's public profile in the context of a strategically placed tourist industry in occupied East Jerusalem—is of interest to the shared ideological and political ambitions of the Jewish State and Evangelical Christians, a connection established in numerous other contexts and well deserving of further inquiry beyond the present framework.

One of the most vivid examples that demonstrates best what I call the “public travesty of archaeology” is the tunnel excavation in Silwan and the City of David’s Archaeological Park. Under the pretext of recovering Jerusalem’s glorious biblical past, rigorously trained archaeologists revert to excavation methods that have been outdated for more than a century. Millions of dollars are invested in clearing underground spaces, including an ancient sewage channel, while the living conditions of the Palestinian villagers living above ground are radically compromised. Proper scientific excavation reports are missing, and valuable scholarly contributions or discoveries enhancing the current knowledge of Jerusalem’s history are lacking. Though the scandalous nature of this enterprise and the misuse of archaeology for a purely ideologically motivated endeavor are widely acknowledged in the scholarly literature, its popular image has not been affected by it. The prominent role entertainment and theme-park packaging play make up effectively for the monotonous stones and dust. Business thrives on the spirit of the Bible reenacted. The City of David has indeed achieved the rank of Israel’s most visited archaeological site, and despite international criticism regarding its obvious association with Israel’s settlement policies, it was recently selected as the scenic film set for a new NBC series entitled *DIG*.<sup>2</sup>

#### MAIN ACTORS

In a topical study on Jerusalem, Craig Larkin and Michael Dumper have aptly described the current status quo of cultural heritage and the various players intertwined in the struggle. In their words, “Jerusalem remains both an occupied and a contested city claimed by two national groups, and subject to dynamic regional trends and global strategic interests. Heritage has becoming an increasing important weapon in the ongoing battle for Jerusalem; for Israelis it is a means of consolidating power and hegemonic control, for Palestinians it has become a rallying call for resistance and defiance. UNESCO is caught between two highly politicized agendas, and is therefore struggling to forge for itself an independent mediating role or indeed convince either side of the ‘World Heritage’ vision of ‘unity in diversity’ and ‘the promotion of mutual understanding and solidarity among peoples.’”<sup>3</sup>

In this succinct description, Larkin and Dumper identify the three main actors who participate in the battle over Jerusalem and their diverging roles in cultural heritage. My study certainly tried to keep these different—indeed, opposing—perspectives, motivations, and agendas in constant focus. Examples that demonstrate Israel’s attempts to consolidate power and hegemonic control through archaeological activities are numerous. These include recent development projects aggressively boosting the tourist industry through the construction of enormous architectural complexes such as the Beit Haliba Building or the Kedem Center in the heart of the Historic Basin, which impose the necessity to conduct so-called salvage

excavations. An example illustrating Palestinian resistance and defiance to Israeli hegemony in East Jerusalem is their refusal to cooperate with the IAA in their restoration and construction efforts at the Haram al-Sharif. UNESCO's struggle to mediate between the two sides of the conflict is evident in the near absence of efforts to foster interreligious and intercultural dialogues among Israelis and Palestinians, in contrast to their more productive intervention in other regions of conflict.<sup>4</sup>

In my view, one important factor to consider when confronting these different actors, as Dumper and Larkin's and similar comparative studies on the conflict attempt to do, is not to impose a frame or model which projects symmetry. Almost in every aspect that touches upon archaeology and cultural heritage in Jerusalem, the impact of the involved players is disproportionate. Whereas Israel's control of the archaeological landscape, both below and above the surface, as well as of the narrative that is being projected, is nearly exclusive, Palestinian and international efforts to counter or even just balance these efforts are modest, if not completely impotent. This brings us to another aspect of asymmetry not explicitly touched upon in the body of this study, but transpiring throughout the chapters. It concerns the asymmetry or, perhaps more accurately, the disproportionate weight of the Palestinian Muslim and the Palestinian Christian heritage of the city. Without imposing a hierarchy on the value or significance of one versus the other cultural and religious legacy in the city, the impact of the different involved religious communities in question and their proclaimed legacies on their relationship with the Israeli government and the Jewish sector of Israeli society more informally is quite different. And there are multiple reasons for this, not all of which are relevant to this study. Of bearing to archaeological practice and issues of cultural legacy is the fact that, given the longer duration of Islamic rule versus Christian governance in Jerusalem, it is the Muslim heritage that dominates the city's landscape, at least quantitatively. Furthermore, since the end of the Crusades, the Muslim community remained the largest population, a situation that changed only toward the end of the Ottoman period or the beginning of the British period, when Jews became the dominant religious community. Relative to the Christian presence, however, the Muslim community continued to maintain its majority. The most recent radical change in the demography and the Muslim/Christian ratio occurred after 1967. When Israel captured East Jerusalem, there were 56,795 Muslims living in Jerusalem, as opposed to 10,813 Christians.<sup>5</sup> According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics in 2006, 32 percent of the city's population was Muslim; only 2 percent was Christian. In other words, the role of Palestinian Christians in matters touching upon cultural heritage in the city, in comparison to Palestinian Muslims, has been relatively minor. And, despite the fact that in recent years there has been a significant increase in the "Palestinianization of clergy," most of the city's church leaders still belong to nonlocal communities.<sup>6</sup> This important numerical

distinction between the city's Muslim and Christian presence in Jerusalem clearly has implications on the role cultural heritage plays in the Israel-Palestine conflict. There are certainly some parallels between Israel's battles with Palestinian Muslims and the ones fought with Palestinian Christians. One similarity would be Israel's imposed military and policing presence at the city's major worship sites, namely the Haram al-Sharif and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The undeniable distinction, however, is the difference in the scale, the severity, and the frequency of the clashes of the numerous authorities and communities implicated in the struggle and representing the different sides of the conflict. The list of recent incidents imposing access restrictions to Muslim worshipers involving armed violence and terror on and near the Haram would be too long to include here. The last major incident of tension related to Israel's security measures controlling the access to the Holy Sepulchre occurred in 2000, in preparations for the millennium celebrations, for which large crowds of pilgrims were expected. The repercussions for the Israel-Palestine conflict of this and other similar incidents, however, are negligible compared to the local, regional, and international implications of clashes and violence surrounding access restrictions to the Haram al-Sharif. Notwithstanding these important distinctions between the different religious communities that make up Palestinian society, there is nonetheless a shared identity and solidarity on numerous issues that inform matters of cultural heritage. Though related to many of the issues examined here, these topics go beyond the scope of my study and are outside my expertise.

#### GRASSROOT INITIATIVES

The ongoing battle among the different parties involved in the safekeeping of the city's cultural heritage is—apart from numerous other reasons raised in this study—a result of the differing perceptions of what constitutes Jerusalem's most significant periods and cultures. One of the more effective ways of overcoming this disparity would be to invest in a more diverse and flexible interpretation of the city's past, where the narrative is not dominated or controlled by one religious or national group, but coordinated among all local resident communities, with input from international participants, third-party specialists, as well as arbitration professionals. The concept of heritage belonging to all humankind is not one that can be imposed and regulated according to a specific protocol that implements merely physical actions and changes. It requires long-term investment and intervention at various levels across the different social, religious, demographic, and educational sectors of society. And most importantly, it requires participation and involvement of all local groups implicated in the religio-national conflict.

Among the first efforts to overcome the disparity of views regarding archaeological and cultural heritage in the region was the establishment of an Israeli

Palestinian Archaeology Working Group (IPAWG), facilitated by the University of California Institute of Archaeology. During a series of meetings, which took place between 2005 and 2009, Israeli and Palestinian archaeologists started to tackle issues of archaeology and cultural-heritage management in Israel-Palestine. One of the main goals of the group was “to consider various aspects of the role of archaeology in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including public perceptions of archaeology, the status of archaeological sites and finds in case of the implementation of a two-state solution, and Jerusalem as a World Heritage Site.” A jointly drafted document made recommendations regarding the role of archaeological heritage in a final-status agreement. Furthermore, a complete inventory of Israeli archaeological activity in the West Bank between 1967 and 2007, the so-called West Bank and East Jerusalem Archaeological Database (WBEJAD) was established.<sup>7</sup> Efforts to renew these initiatives have been underway, such as, for example, Emek Shaveh’s steering committee, which just (in June of 2016) released a comprehensive plan for managing ancient sites in Jerusalem’s Historic Basin, entitled Guiding Principles for a Jerusalem Antiquities Master Plan.<sup>8</sup>

Even if issues of cultural heritage are often considered a relatively minor point in the much larger Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and relegated to marginal matters of disaccord, they do affect surprisingly large segments of the local population and are major players in the shaping of public opinion. Consequently, if these issues can be nuanced appropriately, and the problems around them resolved, the possibilities of negotiations in other areas will have a better chance to advance.

#### WHAT NEXT?

With over 1,700 sites having been excavated in Jerusalem, and the considerable fortunes spent on archaeological fieldwork, interpretation, conservation, and presentation, our knowledge on the city’s cultural development from prehistory to the present is tremendous. Archaeological sites, ancient monuments, and artifacts dominate and indeed overwhelm the landscape. Despite the significant investment in archaeological practice, most ancient buildings, particularly in the Old City and the Historic Basin, are neglected and would benefit from a complete overhaul and restoration program. Moreover, most completed excavations have not been properly published. It would take decades or perhaps even a century of research, employing dozens of archaeologists, to make up for the lacking final reports, a debt that should haunt the profession and alarm those concerned about Jerusalem’s cultural heritage. Conducting further excavations will not only increase the debt, but it will ultimately widen the gap between actual data and knowledge. The already-exposed layers, monuments, and artifacts provide us with almost unparalleled data to reconstruct Jerusalem’s history through the millennia. Rather than illuminating exiting questions, newly excavated material often increases the riddles



and produce new unresolved problems. It is time to halt this activity and invest in other sectors of the city's cultural heritage—most importantly, in the domains of education and professional training as well as the conservation of exposed ruins and standing monuments. Let us find what is already there, rather than look for something that may only further complicate both the mysteries of the past and the conflicts of the present!

